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THOUGHTS
FOR THE HOLY WEEK,
FOR YOUNG PERSONS.

THOUGHTS
FOR
THE HOLY WEEK,
For Young Persons.

BY MISS SEWELL,
AUTHOR OF "AMY HERBERT," ETC.



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PREFACE.

THE following papers require an excuse and an explanation.

They were originally begun, more than ten years ago, for the sake of some children in whom the writer was very deeply interested. Afterwards they were laid aside, as being too slight to be of further use.

In Lent, 1856, being desirous to read something suited to the Holy Week, to a party of young persons and servants, and having, on previous occasions, exhausted the Sermons and Tracts within reach which were peculiarly appropriate to the season, the Writer reverted to these papers, and partially enlarged and remodelled them. They were then read aloud at the time of family prayers.

As they were found to suit the purpose

for which they were intended, it seemed probable that they might be useful to other persons under similar circumstances.

In this hope they have since been completed, and are now published.

It is scarcely necessary to say that they are not intended to draw out in detail the lessons conveyed by the awful events of the Holy Week, but merely to fix the attention upon one point for each day, and, if possible, to create a more vivid perception of the acts commemorated.

The Writer will only add, that she should have shrunk from touching upon the subjects of some of the later chapters, but for the assistance derived from the works of the Rev. Isaac Williams, on *The Passion* and *The Resurrection*.

BONCHURCH, *March* 7th, 1857.

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THOUGHTS FOR THE HOLY WEEK.

Sunday Before Easter.

LAMENTATIONS, Chap. i. 12.—“Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, where-with the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of His fierce anger.”

THE week upon which we have just entered is called the Holy Week. It is a week unlike any other in the year; for in it we are required to think upon, or commemorate, the sufferings and death of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

When very little children, we were taught that God created Adam and Eve, holy and happy, and placed them in the Garden of Eden, with the permission to eat of every tree in the garden, except the tree of knowledge of good and evil. We learnt also that Adam and Eve disobeyed God, being tempted by the devil, in the form of a serpent; and that, in consequence of this act, they, their children, and all who were born after them, became sinners, and the enemies of God; that the earth was cursed, and brought forth briers and thorns; that pain and suffering have ever since been inflicted, not only upon human beings, but upon every living creature; and that death must be the end of all, since "dust we are, and unto dust must we return."

This we have heard often and often. Probably we cannot remember when we first heard it, it is so long ago.

Neither, perhaps, can we recall the time when we first were told that our Lord Jesus Christ, the blessed Son of God, undertook to bear the punishment which we and all Adam's children have deserved; that He came upon earth, and took our nature upon Him, and died upon the Cross; and that, for His sake, God has promised to forgive us, and to receive as His children all who are baptized and believe in Christ, and show their faith by endeavoring to live a life of holiness. These facts seem quite natural to us, and we should be surprised if any one were to say that we knew little about them.

But let us consider this matter more closely, and in a way which may make us clearly understand what we mean by knowing anything. If we were now asked to describe some neighboring country which we had never seen, we should be able probably to find it

on the map directly; and we might easily tell the names of the principal towns, and rivers, and bays, and might speak also of the climate and the character of the people. But a native of that country, if he were to come among us, would most likely smile at what he heard, and say that we were extremely ignorant. And after listening to his description, we should have a very different idea of the country from that which we had before. Instead, for instance, of merely knowing the name of the chief city, we should be able to picture it to ourselves, and imagine that we were on the spot, looking at the houses, walking down the streets, sitting under the trees, or wandering over the hills which perhaps encircle it. This knowledge would be a great deal more true and interesting than the other; though, of course, it would not be like that of a person who had

actually seen with his own eyes the places mentioned.

Now, in the same way, but much more seriously, there is a difference between knowing what the Bible tells us, so as to be able to answer questions; and knowing it so as really to picture to ourselves the events described, as they happened, or as they might have appeared to us if we had lived at the very time at which the circumstances took place, and had seen and talked to the persons about whom we read. This latter kind of knowledge is very desirable for us to have, because the things we see make a deeper impression upon us than those of which we only hear; and if we can bring vividly before our minds the solemn events which we are ordered to think upon in the Holy Week, we may, through God's Mercy, become more humbled for our sins, and more touched by the unspeak-

able goodness of God our Saviour, in dying to save us from their punishment.

None of us may say we are children, and therefore we cannot think. When Jesus Christ was upon earth, His love was peculiarly shown to children. "He commanded them to be brought unto Him, He blamed those who would have kept them from Him. . . . He embraced them in His arms, laid His hands upon them and blessed them." As He loved the Jewish children then, so He loves the little ones who come to Him now. As He died to save them, so He now dwells in glory and prays for them. Every joy is His gift—every blessing is from His care. More anxiously than a father He provides for them—more tenderly than a mother He watches over them. At this season of the year, He asks that all should remember the pain He bore

for them. Who will be so ungrateful as to forget it?

But before we try to recall the events of the Holy Week—before we endeavor, however imperfectly, to understand what our Saviour did and suffered for us at the close of His earthly life, it may be well to carry back our thoughts to its beginning, and consider for a few moments what the Home was which for our sakes He left, and dwell in imagination upon that to which for our sakes He came.

The home Christ left was Heaven—the bright, pure, glorious Heaven—far away, amid the dazzling suns, and the glittering stars, which we see when we look up to the arched sky above our heads. It was a Home free from sorrow, and pain, and death; filled with glory which “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to

conceive." And in that home, as we are told in the Book of Revelation, "a throne was set, and one sat on the throne, and He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone; and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunders and voices; and there were seven lamps burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God."

Yes, Heaven was our Saviour's Home. There, through ages and ages, back and back, before the earth was made, before the stars were formed, before the sun came forth "rejoicing as a giant to run his course," He dwelt—the Holy, Awful, Blessed God. There the bright angels veiled their faces before Him, and sang their Hymns of Praise; and there they sounded their golden harps,

and their voices echoed through myriads of worlds, "Hallelujah, for the Lord Gód Omnipotent reigneth."

In that Home—but for Adam's sin—Christ, our Lord, might have dwelt for ever.

Let us turn and see the home to which for us He came—the home of man. In the country of Judæa, not very far from the city of Jerusalem, there is a small town, crowded with people; they have come from distant places at the will of a foreign Lord: he requires money from them, he has given an order that every one of a certain age and condition shall be taxed, and for this purpose each family is commanded to go to its own city. But the houses for public shelter are too few and too small to accommodate all: the poorest are driven to seek refuge elsewhere; and two from amongst the travellers, turned from the inn in which they would

have sojourned, have found their place of rest in a stable. There, in the manger, prepared for oxen, they have placed their new-born Child; and there, shepherds, taught by the angels of God, seek Him, and worship Him. For this is the Saviour's first home on earth. We will look again.

There is another country very distant from Judæa; its inhabitants are strangers to the dwellers in the Holy Land. In centuries passed away, they have exercised over them a cruel tyranny; they are heathens, idolaters—they worship the vilest of reptiles, and are full of the grossest superstition. Their language is unknown, their customs are unfamiliar; there is little to attract a Jew in the land of Egypt: but thither the father, and the mother, and the Babe who lay in the manger, are journeying, for there is no safety in their own land. The command of a cruel king has gone

forth, that all the children in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, "from two years old and under," shall be slain; and no home is now to be found for the Saviour of the world, but the waste desert, or the land which has departed from its God. And years have gone by, and He who vouchsafed to be born of a woman, and to be laid in a manger, is about to preach the Gospel of Glad Tidings to the poor, to heal the sick, and cleanse the leper, and raise the dead. Where is his home? In the howling wilderness, where the vulture hovers over its prey, and the lions "seek their meat from God;" alone, friendless, shelterless, without food, in the presence of evil spirits, tempted by the prince of all evil—there shall we meet the Saviour of the world. And when that fiery trial has passed, and He has returned to the haunts of men, His own words will best reveal

the life to which He consented to humble Himself. "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head."

Does not the history of His life witness to the depth of His humiliation? We see Him wandering from town to town, from village to village, persecuted and despised. He may sit at the table of the rich Pharisee, but the Publican and the outcast are there admitted to His Presence. He may dwell for a while with Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus; but the house of His friends is no protection against the malice of the Priests, and the treachery of Judas. Herod has no royal chamber for the King of Kings; Pilate has no hall of state for the Ruler of the world. And on the last night of His sojourn upon earth in a human body, the roof of his home is the cold midnight sky, and the

couch of His repose the stony earth, beneath the olives of Gethsemane.

If the brightest of the earthly homes which has been granted to us are but dark prison-houses, compared with the homes of Heaven, what must that desolation, from which even we should shrink, have been to the Lord of Glory—the One, only Well-Beloved Son of the Almighty Father!

During the present week, it is probable that many of us may go each day to Church, to kneel in prayer to God, and listen to the awful history of the sufferings of our Blessed Redeemer. This will be the public remembrance of the misery He endured for man. But the service will end—we shall return to our homes. They will look the same as before: we shall see the same furniture, the same flowers, the same trees and shrubs; the persons who have been our companions on other days, will still be

with us: we may forget that it is the Holy Week.

But, perhaps, in the midst of our occupations, or lessons, or play, our eyes may wander to the deep blue sky; we may catch the form of a mass of clouds piled high in the air, and passing slowly above our heads; or we may hear the song of a bird, and follow its rapid wing, and wish that we, like it, could rise till we reached what it seems would be the entrance of Heaven. Should it be so, let a thought be brought back to our hearts—a thought of our Redeemer, a thought for the Holy Week.

Christ, the Almighty God, the King of Glory, left His Throne far away in the depths of those boundless Heavens. He dwelt amidst sin and sorrow. For us He suffered; for us He died.

Is there any one (even the youngest) able to understand what suffering and death mean, who cannot, at some

hour in each day of the present week, leave his business or his amusement, and go to his own chamber, and closing the door, think for a few minutes upon the unspeakable change from the joys of a sinless Heaven to the sadness of an evil world, and then read a Psalm, or repeat a Collect, or a Prayer, as a confession of his own guilt, and in grateful remembrance of his Saviour?

Such acts, indeed, are of no value without the inward feeling of the heart. But they are means by which that feeling may, through God's mercy, be obtained. If we begin them now, not because we feel, but because we wish to do so, God will assuredly bless them. Even supposing we find them to be a painful self-denial, instead of a willing service—let us not for that reason omit them. If we wait till we wish to pray, we shall probably never pray at all. If

we do not try to remember our Redeemer until the thought comes to us without effort, the cares of the world will crowd upon us, and its pleasures will tempt us, and even its innocent duties and occupations will engross us, and at length our very power of feeling will be lost.

There is a disease to which the human body is subject, by which the very substance of the heart is turned into bone. It comes scarcely suspected ; it steals onwards day by day, it gives but little pain—but at length the sufferer dies. It is called ossification. There is a spiritual ossification, as little suspected, as painless, and a million times more fatal.

It is caused by the neglect of the daily endeavor to keep our hearts tender by thinking of our Saviour. Long prayers are not needed—even solitude and privacy are not required. God has given us each a temple in

which we may worship Him—even the heart into which He entered at our Baptism. There we may ponder upon a verse of the Gospel, though our hands may be busy with our work ; there we may think the earnest prayer which perhaps we cannot utter in words. Only let us not leave the practice to chance. Let us fix the times, recall our thoughts, make the effort in spite of the ensnaring cares of life, and by degrees we shall form ourselves into a habit of devotion, of loving remembrance of our Lord, which, if God should spare us to spend another Holy Week on earth, may, through His grace, make it not only the duty, but the relief of our burdened hearts, to turn aside for a few days from the world, and see “whether there be any sorrow like unto His sorrow . . . wherewith the Lord afflicted Him in the day of His fierce anger.”

Monday Before Easter.

ST. MARK, Chap. xi. 7, 8.—“And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on Him; and He sat upon him. And many spread their garments in the way; and others cut down branches off the trees, and strawed them in the way.”

WE are about to consider the close of our Blessed Lord's life on earth. Even in the case of a human friend, we anxiously collect every little circumstance which precedes the last hour; we remember each word—recall each look & store in our memories every expression of affection. There are few among us who would not wish to do so now. If, by *storing* a miracle from God, the events of the

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 days which passed immediately before the Passion and Death of our Redeemer could be placed before us in minute detail, the narrative would be one of such thrilling interest, that even the most hardened and ignorant would, it might seem, be awakened by it to thoughtful sympathy. *acc*

But God, in His all-seeing Wisdom, has not thought fit thus to indulge us. It may be that He sees how soon the impression caused by such excitement would fade away, and leave us colder than before. He has given us only the outline, and left us to fill up the picture for ourselves ; and, doubtless, the very effort of imagination which is required, if made humbly, with the determination of not going beyond the facts recorded in Scripture, will be in no ordinary degree beneficial to us. It will compel us to linger by our Lord's side, and study reverently the meaning of the few incidents

which God has seen fit to preserve to us. It will enable us to throw a new light, and a new interest, upon well-known words, as we read them by the guidance of others, or dwell upon them in solitary thought, or meditate upon them devotionally, kneeling before our God, and praying Him to open our eyes that we may understand them. Volumes have been written upon the few last pages of the Gospel—volumes read and studied by man. Volumes, also, have been written by the Finger of God upon the hearts of His children, which will never be fully revealed to them until, in the kingdom of their Father, the course of their earthly trial is made clear, and they see how, by prayer and meditation, and earnest inquiry into the history of their Redeemer's sufferings, their hearts were touched, and they were set forward on that course of loving, grateful obedience,

which, through the merits of the Cross of Christ, has brought them to be partakers of His glory.

And, surely, if at any seasons such meditations are required of us, they must be so now. If the circumstances commemorated on this day bear with them somewhat of a character of festival rejoicing, yet with them mingles the gloom of coming woe; and the Hosannas which echo in our ears, as we witness in imagination the triumphal entry of our Lord into Jerusalem, die away in the sorrowful lamentation over the ruin so soon to fall on the people about to crucify their Redeemer. Shall we for a few moments carry our thoughts back to the distant scene, and endeavor to bring home to our hearts the lesson which for ages has been taught by it?

We will suppose ourselves sojourners at Jerusalem, summoned thither by the Festival of the Pass-

over. Our Lord was not in the city. The night had been spent by him at Bethany. There, Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus had met Him and His disciples at the house of Simon the Leper; and Mary had poured forth the precious ointment and "anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair;" and by that act of humble love, foreshadowing His burial, had gained for herself a name of praise never to be forgotten. There, also, Judas had betrayed his covetousness, and, as we may believe, indignant at the gentle reproof of his Master, formed the first project of the awful crime which was to bring him to shame, and death, and perdition. These two circumstances are so deeply impressed upon our minds, so inseparably connected with the recollection of Bethany, that we are apt to dwell upon them to the exclusion of all others.

Yet there were persons to be found, if not that night, at least early on the following morning, at the little village, in whom we are perhaps more likely to discover our own resemblance than in the devoted Mary or the treacherous Judas. "Much people of the Jews therefore knew that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom He had raised from the dead." Had we been at Jerusalem in those days, we should probably have gone thither also. Bethany was but a short distance from Jerusalem—not more than two miles. Lying in a shallow valley on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, it could easily be approached by the pathway over the hill. It would have been a walk of beauty and of interest; and if we had been amongst those newly arrived to keep the Feast of the Passover, we might

have listened with wonder to the tale of the raising of Lazarus from his grave, and desirous to satisfy our curiosity by the sight of "the dead who was alive again," and of Him who was said to possess powers so miraculous; we might probably have joined ourselves readily to the mixed concourse of strangers and sojourners in the city, who wended their way that morning over the Mount of Olives to the quiet village of Bethany. Or we might have been found amongst another company. Those who first visited Bethany were attracted thither only, it would seem, by curiosity; but the excitement must have increased as the wonderful tale of the raising of Lazarus spread from mouth to mouth amongst the strangers who crowded Jerusalem, and when tidings reached the ears of the people that Jesus Himself was about to visit the city, the multitude in

their eager joy thronged the road by which He was to pass, and pulling down branches from the palm-trees which clothed the south-eastern corner of the mountain, went forth to meet Him, and cry, "Blessed be He that cometh in the name of the Lord."

The quiet and thoughtful-minded among us would probably have satisfied ourselves by the morning walk over the Mount of Olives; the more excitable would have felt themselves roused by the enthusiasm of numbers, and scarcely knowing whence it arose, would have been carried away by it to take part in the triumphal procession.

In either case, we might have imagined ourselves to be willing inquirers into the truth of Christ's miracles, willing to do Him homage, ready to own Him as our Lord. Much more might we have done so, if the whisper had circulated amongst

the crowd, that the Chief Priests were jealous of this wondrous worker of miracles—that they were plotting not only His death, but that of Lazarus. If even a suspicion of this fact had reached us, and still we had continued on our way, bent upon beholding Christ at all risks, we should scarcely have doubted that we were earnest in our wish to devote ourselves to Him, if only we could be certain of the reality of His mission.

We will imagine ourselves to have followed the triumphant crowd. The city is left behind us; we have ascended the Mount of Olives, and reached the brow of the hill. There is no need to go farther: Christ Himself is drawing near. Centuries before, the Prophet described that approach: "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass." The disciples, at their Lord's com-

mand, have brought the ass, with its colt ; they have put their clothes upon it, and set Him thereon ; and the people accompanying Him are unwrapping their loose cloaks, and stretching them along the stony path to form a temporary carpet as He approaches, or cutting down branches from the trees, are strewing them before him. However dull of belief, however difficult to be persuaded of the evidence of things beyond their senses, they have been won over by the sight of Lazarus, and the actual beholding of His Deliverer from the bonds of death ; and now the multitudes that go before, and that follow, join in one mighty song of praise : " Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the Highest."

If there may have been a shadow of doubt in our minds before, there can be none any longer. The world

has gone after Christ. We must go after Him likewise; and so we, like those whom we have been following, retrace our steps, and accompany the procession back towards Jerusalem.

Onward we go, our voices mingling in the songs of triumph and of praise, as we traverse the pathway along the lovely slope of the green hill, amidst the myrtle-groves, and pines and fig-trees, and the olives from which its name is taken. But a sudden turn in the road meets us, and in one moment Jerusalem, the chosen City of God, bursts upon our view.

There it lies before us,—“beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth!” Who shall tell the grandeur of its rocky walls, encircled by the deep valleys of Hinnom and Jehoshaphat, through which, in the time of the autumnal rains, flow the rushing waters of the Kedron? “Who shall number its towers, and mark its bul-

warks?" It stands out boldly, and the mountains, the type of God's protection, close around it,—“for as the hills stand about Jerusalem, even so standeth the Lord round about His people from this time forth for evermore.” Viewed from the Mount of Olives, they appear to mingle with the city itself. The “long purple wall” rises out of the depths of the valleys, its hues constantly changing as some precipitous rock comes out clearly in the morning shade; whilst so distinctly is the city seen, that the eye roves over the streets and the walls and towers, as if in the survey of a model. The Palace of Herod the Great, part of which formed the armory of the Roman soldiers and the Judgment-hall of Pilate, stands forth in splendor; and the Tower of Antonia, the Roman fortress which guards the city, is seen on a steep rock adjoining the north-west corner of the

Temple; and the Asmonean Palace, the residence of the princes of the Herodian family, may be perceived at the extremity of the upper city; whilst in the midst, greater than all in glory and extent, rises the Temple upon Mount Sion.

A Jew,—standing upon the Mount of Olives, gazing upon the dwelling-place of his forefathers, the magnificent home of the chosen of God, and listening to the glad acclamations which welcomed the coming of One, of whom it was said that He was the Messiah, the Prince, about to destroy the Roman power, and make Jerusalem the centre of dominion over the earth,—if we had been such, would not our hearts have stirred within us to do and dare all for His sake? If tears had risen to our eyes, surely they would have been the tears of ardent self-sacrifice,—courage which could never flinch from danger—en-

thusiasm which longed for the moment of trial—love which would lay down life in the cause of its country and its Deliverer.

Such tears might have been witnessed on that morning, but we do not hear of them. Some, indeed, were shed; but they were the outpouring of the sorrow of God made Man.

“And when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou

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knowest not the time of thy visitation."

All, then, was to vanish. "The adversary was to spread out his hand upon all her pleasant things, the heathen were to enter into her sanctuary. The Lord had purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion; the rampart and the wall were to lament and languish together; her gates were to be sunk in the ground, her bars destroyed and broken." And her enemies, opening their mouths against her, were to exclaim, "We have swallowed her up. Certainly, this is the day that we looked for: we have found, we have seen it."

And why?—

There seems at first no connection between the glad spectacle of that triumphant morning, and the scenes of utter desolation which were to follow; but, to the Eye of the All-seeing God, the crimes which were to fill up

the measure of a nation's wickedness, and bring down upon it the fulness of wrath, were present at that hour in awful and enduring reality.

In the Asmonean Palace, Herod and his men of war were to set at nought the Saviour of the world. In the armory of the Roman soldiers who garrisoned Jerusalem, He was to be mocked and scourged. From the judgment-seat of Pilate, "the place that is called the Pavement; but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha;" the Holy One was to be sent forth to death. And mingling with the shouts of the joyful multitudes, then sounding Hosanna to the Son of David, another cry rose up to Heaven,—“Away with Him! away with Him! Crucify Him.”

Those words need but one comment. It was made by the Jews themselves: “His Blood be on us and on our children.”

Well indeed might the Saviour of the world weep at the thought of the woe contained in them !

But the scene is over: the glad procession has passed by ; the shouts of the multitude have died away in the distance, and following the leading of their Lord, the crowds pour through the streets of Jerusalem.

We will leave them, as they pursue their way, "whilst all the city is moved, saying, Who is this? And the multitude reply, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee." For us there are other scenes and other thoughts.

If we had been amongst that unstable multitude, should we on one day have joined in the song of rejoicing praise, and before the week had passed, cried aloud for the murder of the innocent?

We answer that we cannot tell. The time is long gone past, the scene

can never be repeated, the trial will never be ours except in the vision of our own imagination.

But are we so sure of this?

There are times, and seasons, and circumstances, which have a strange power over us, often not to be resisted. They come to us each, in different forms, according to our different characters. Music will stir the hearts of some, so that the pulse will be quickened, the brain excited, the whole power of the will aroused to do mighty and glorious deeds. Words of affection will touch the feelings of others, and the eye will grow moist with tears, and the voice will falter—and in loving devotion vows will be made which it seems can never be broken. The sight of earnestness in our fellow-creatures will kindle our own cold hearts, and with companions to cheer and rouse us, we feel that we could nerve ourselves to any

labor, any suffering or toil. Or God himself speaks to us, alone, in the presence of some glorious work of creation. We gaze, perhaps, from the summit of a great mountain upon the jagged hills tossed about beneath us, and trace them, one beyond another, far as the eye can reach, till in the utmost distance sharp sunny peaks stand forth against the sky, scarcely to be distinguished from the mists which gather round them; and we think of Him who, by His Mighty Power, "hath rent the mountains, and broken in pieces the rocks," and, humbled and awe-struck, feel that from henceforth we can never dare to rebel against His will. Or, again, our lot may be cast for a while in some lovely country, where the acacia, the olive, and the vine, crowd the borders of the blue lake, which reflects the glory of an unclouded sky; and villages are clustered at the

foot of the steep but smooth hills, and church towers rise amidst chestnut groves; and as we gaze upon the surpassing beauty of this ruined earth, our thoughts travel onwards to the world into which sin cannot enter, and tears rush unbidden to our eyes, and longings intense and unutterable rise up in our hearts for the hour when we shall be permitted "to see the King in His Beauty—to behold the land which is very far off." Some of these feelings all of us perhaps have had, more or less. They are rooted in our nature. They belong to those impulses which, if we had witnessed the entry of our Lord into Jerusalem, would have carried us away irresistibly to join in the adoring cry—"Hosanna to the Son of David."

But, are they religion? Are they true devotion? Will they guard us in the hour of temptation, and keep

us steadfast in our obedience to Christ?

God forbid that we should despise such feelings, or receive them unthankfully. They are merciful aids, granted to smooth and gladden our path to Heaven. But God forbid also, that we should forget that the same excitement which roused the Jewish multitude to shout "Hosanna," roused them also to cry, "Crucify Him ! crucify Him !"

At this season we have need especially to remember it. Holy thoughts, good resolutions, are, through God's Grace, especially called forth by the Holy Week and Easter. However indifferent we may in general be, a sense of something deeper and more earnest is likely to be present to us, if it be only from the call to more frequent services, and the knowledge that others deem it well to retire, for this week, from the world, and give

themselves to fasting, and weeping, and mourning, for their own sin and their Lord's punishment, in preparation for the glorious anniversary of His Resurrection. Much more, if we have really given ourselves to God, may we hope to have deep thoughts of penitence, and fervent love to our Saviour, when we are bidden to meditate upon His sufferings, day by day, and to follow Him from His entry in triumph into Jerusalem, to betrayal, and agony, and death. We feel, or we wish to feel;—most right, most natural it is: but if we would stamp the feeling and the wish upon our hearts, and cause them to do their work upon our lives, let us turn them, without delay, into action.

By action alone are feelings formed into shape, and preserved. Without it, they pass away, as the steam rises from the heated water, and disperses itself till lost in the air.

If we have but one warmer feeling, one more earnest wish to do right during this Holy Week, let us take heed to seize it ere it vanishes.

We wish that we could love our Saviour more;—then let us go at once and pray that He would teach us to love Him. The prayer may be made in the secrecy of our hearts; but it is better, if possible, to retire to the solitude of our own chamber. It requires more effort—it is a greater test of our sincerity—it will keep the remembrance of the wish more vividly in our minds.

We grieve for our besetting sin, when we think that for sin Christ died. Then let us, without delay, face our temptation,—ask what it is which leads us to give way to it,—resolve, through God's help, to strive against it resolutely, at least for a certain time,—for this Holy Week,—with the full intention, through God's

assistance, of humbly renewing that resolution afterwards.

We are sad because we cannot enter into our Saviour's sufferings,—because we read of them with such indifference. Let us fix upon some act of personal self-denial, or some daily enjoyment to be relinquished during the Holy Week, which may bring to us the thought that Christ bore torture for our sakes, and gave up the Blessedness of Heaven for the agony of Death upon the Cross.

Nothing which may lastingly imprint such a thought in our memories is too slight to be despised; and the cup of cold water rejected for Christ's sake, we may trust, shall be received as a token of our sympathy, as the cup of cold water given shall surely be accepted for a proof of our love.

Tuesday Before Easter.

ST. MATTHEW, Chap. xxi. 12.—“And Jesus went into the Temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the Temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves.”

THE most sad events of the Holy Week took place towards its close. It is not till the night before Good Friday that we are called upon to dwell upon the actual suffering of our Lord;—the suffering, that is, of His Body as well as of His Mind. But the days which went before must not therefore be passed by as times of peace and rest.

It is difficult in any way to compare our Blessed Lord's trials with

our own: a fear of irreverence often arises in our hearts when we attempt to do so. Yet, as He condescended to be "made like unto us in all things, sin only excepted;" so we may imagine that when about to endure such bitter suffering, He was not spared the anguish which preceded it. We must all know, or at least we must be able to understand, in a measure, what that anguish would be. To be certain that pain and sorrow are approaching,—that they are close at hand,—that every night, when we lie down to sleep, we are a day nearer to all which we have cause to dread;—this is very hard to bear. It destroys our present ease, it throws a gloom over every moment of enjoyment, it renders us deaf to every sound of joy.

Our Blessed Saviour was Man as well as God. We are told often in the Gospels, that He spake to His

disciples of that which was about to befall Him; with the wish, doubtless, to prepare their minds for it,—but also, we may believe, with that longing desire to unburden the heart of the certainty of a coming woe, which is so strong an instinct of our nature. In the Garden of Gethsemane, “He offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save Him.” And if such agony overwhelmed Him when the hour of His death was close at hand, surely the days of its gradual approach must have been heavy with the weight of “a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind.”

But it is impossible for us to obtain any real idea of the extent of our Lord’s trial in this respect, for we are sinful creatures, and Christ was the Eternal God; and for One so blessed to suffer must have been unutterably worse than for us.

And He could foresee also most perfectly every circumstance which would add to the bitterness of death. He could already behold Himself forsaken by His disciples, and hear the scoffings of the multitude, and the maddened cry which called for His crucifixion. He could already feel the cutting of the sharp scourge, and the piercing of the Crown of thorns, and the heavy burden of the Cross, and the first keen agony of the nails which were to be driven through His hands and feet.

All must have been to Him as if at that moment present; and each day that went by, each morning, and noonday, and even, must have been marked as by the tolling of the awful bell which summons forth a prisoner to die.

But how did our Saviour act, with this full knowledge of all that must so soon happen to Him?

How should we have acted? Perhaps we might have shut ourselves up in our chambers, and hidden ourselves from the light of the sun, and refused to taste bread, or drink wine, or to look upon the faces of our fellow-creatures. Perhaps we should have wandered alone into the fields, striving to forget our misery by walking through desert places; or we might have rushed into the streets in despair, calling upon those to help us who had no power to save.

What did our Saviour do? How have we reason to believe that He spent this day?

Each night He slept at Bethany,—most probably at the house of Martha, and Mary,—and Lazarus, whom He raised from the dead. Whilst He continued there, He was at peace with friends who loved Him. At Jerusalem there were the cruel Priests, the proud Pharisees, the

wicked Herod, the weak Pilate. If He must die—if it were so ordered by His own Will, and the Will of His Heavenly Father, ^{et}/_n would it not seem to us happier and better that He should have remained the few last, sad days with those so dear to Him?

In such a case, knowing that death was drawing nigh, we should have sought for all the comfort and support which the sympathy of friends can give.

But our Lord Jesus Christ was not weak, like us. He had no thought for Himself; and though the time approached at which it was appointed for Him to suffer, He still went day by day to Jerusalem.

He had a work to do there—a service for His Almighty Father. We will linger for a few moments to consider what it was. The grandeur of Jerusalem has already been alluded to, but that which was its chief glory

may demand a more minute notice. The Temple upon Mount Zion, the Holy House, the sanctuary of the Most High, was the centre of veneration and love to every true Israelite. It was not the same Temple which Solomon dedicated to his Maker: that had long since been levelled with the ground,—destroyed for the sins of a wicked people. But it was a grand and spacious building, founded upon the solid rock, and surrounded by a deep precipice; and built of hard, white stones, so enormous in size, that the disciples of our Lord, when for the last time they left it together, called upon Him to admire and wonder at them. The entrance to the Temple was, we are told, through nine gates, thickly coated with gold and silver. Through these gates men passed into the outer court—the Court of the Gentiles. Beyond this none but the Jews might go. A

range of porticoes was built around the Gentile Court; and above them were galleries, and apartments, resting upon pillars of white marble.

Within were the two Courts of the Israelites,—one set apart for the women, the other for the men; and beyond, more hidden from the common eye, the Court of the Priests, where was the altar of burnt offerings, to which the people brought their gifts and sacrifices, but which the Priests alone might dare to approach. Yet, beautiful as the outer court of this temple must have been, the Sanctuary, or inner temple, was far more so. One, who saw it in its splendor, tells us that it was covered with plates of gold, which, when the sun rose upon it, shone with lustre so dazzling, that the eye could not bear to rest upon it. The Sanctuary was the innermost portion of the temple, which the Priests might enter; for

into the Holy of Holies, the most sacred spot, the type of Heaven, the High Priest alone was admitted, once in the year—on the great Day of Atonement.

Such was the Temple of Jerusalem in the days when our Lord Jesus Christ vouchsafed to live upon earth. Forty and six years had it taken in building; and there the people went to worship, and the Priests knelt to seek God's Blessing upon Israel, and Christ, the Saviour, instructed and worked miracles for those very persons who were soon about to crucify Him. On this day, as Christ passed along the side of the Mount of Olives, He must have beheld ~~its~~ gorgeous splendor in the clear light of the early morning. The porch built by Solomon, standing on a raised terrace of such prodigious height that no one could look down without awe and dizziness from its flat roof to the val-

ley below, was immediately opposite to the mountain ; and the Sanctuary, white and glistening, and in appearance, as we are told by the Jewish historian, like a mountain covered with snow, must have shone forth in all its sparkling magnificence, arresting the attention of the beholder.

But the Eye which then rested on the Temple of Jérusalem saw not "as man seeth." Christ looked not at the outward splendor, but the inward irreverence. God's House was built to be a House of Prayer, but the Jews had made it a den of thieves. And in that Holy Temple, the place set apart for the service of God, were to be found persons occupying themselves in worldly traffic—making the dwelling of the Most High a place of merchandise. They were in the Court of the Gentiles. Some were sitting to sell, others standing near to buy ; tables were to be seen, where

men were exchanging money, and places where the doves required by the law for offerings might be chosen and purchased.

Perhaps the persons so engaged did not deem themselves irreverent; perhaps they would have excused themselves by saying that they bought and sold things necessary for the services of the Temple, and occupied only the Gentile Court, the least holy portion of the sacred building; perhaps they thought that it was an old custom, and not more sinful for them than for their forefathers. It is easy for us all to find plausible reasons for what we wish to do, or are in the habit of doing; easy to hide from ourselves the nature of the sin we are committing. The Jewish traders occupied themselves in their usual employments, unknowing and unthinking that an Eye was upon them watching their guilt, and that an arm

was about to be stretched out to punish them.

Jesus entered the city. Who knew that He was approaching? Who thought of or watched Him? Doubtless, on that morning, men hurried to and fro on business, and children played in the streets, and women rose from their rest to set about their daily work; and the sick, who had tossed restlessly on their beds during the night, stole forth slowly to enjoy the breath of the pure air; and the healthy and the gay laughed merrily as they met and spoke of what should be said or done during the day. Who were there, then, in Jerusalem, to think of or care for the Holy Saviour who was passing before their homes and through their streets, on His way to declare, for the last time, the Anger of the Almighty against those who profaned His House of Prayer?

Yet some there were from whom

He could not be hid. "Jesus went into the Temple. He began to cast out them that sold and bought in the Temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers and the seats of them that sold doves, and would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the Temple."

It seems, at first sight, strange that this should so easily have been done. Many must have been present who were angry, who would willingly have continued their pursuits, and have shown their indignation by attacking their Lord.

Yet one by one they departed, fleeing from His presence, forgetting their merchandise, and leaving the Courts of the Most High once more silent and deserted.

They were sinners in the presence of their Judge. He who was afterwards to be mocked, and scourged, and crucified, was then full of power.

and might ; for the hour of His weakness, endured for their sakes, was not yet come.

God has a Temple still ; yet not one only, but hundreds. They stand upon hill-sides, in lonely valleys—in the midst of quiet villages, nestling amongst trees, with the green turf around them, covering the graves of the dead.

God's Temples are His Churches.

When the Saviour of the world, the Lord who was crucified, vouchsafes to fill those temples with His Presence, what does He behold ? Are there seats for money-changers ? places for those who sell doves ? Do men buy, and sell, and get gain in churches ? Not so, we reply ; we are Christians. Our churches are holy places. We glory in their beauty, and lavish money upon their decoration. We feel that it is right to treat them with all reverence, and we condemn

those who profane them; they are houses of prayer, and the world's business may not enter them. So far, then, we call ourselves better and holier than the Jews. But it was the outer Court of the Jewish Temple alone which was thus desecrated; the Holy of Holies, the inmost Sanctuary of the Most High, remained untouched. There, if Christ had entered, He might have found a "room swept and garnished," ready for His Presence.

Are there not innermost Christian Sanctuaries—Chambers of the heart—once purified at Baptism, still dedicated to God, and in which He expects that we should receive Him?

When Christ enters the Temple of this earthly building, He will not linger in the outer Court; His home is the Sanctuary of the heart, and there only will He rest. Let us ask ourselves what He will find there.

Alas! who may dare to answer? Who may venture to repeat, even in the ears of his fellow-creatures, the idle thoughts, the busy plans, the foolish wishes, the wicked imaginations, which enter his heart in Church? Who will endure to recall those which have been with him during this week—the week of his Saviour's sufferings.

It is vain for us to say that we cannot help them, that they throng us, and beset us, and enter unperceived, and if cast out for a time return again to mock us with our weakness. No doubt this is so. No doubt there are wandering imaginations, forms and phantoms, which steal into that sacred chamber unbidden, and when forced to depart come back to claim admission as their due. God has permitted this trial in its measure to every man, even to the holiest. But if all were right with us at other times, would all be thus wrong with us in Church?

When we stand around the dying bed of one we dearly love, watching the failing pulse and the gasping breath, and gathering up the last faint words of love, we have but few thoughts except those connected with our sorrow. Much more if that dying bed be a bed of lingering torture—if we see the form convulsed with agony, the hands clutched in extremity of pain, and the clammy dews of anguish settling upon the livid features; we have no distracted attention. The care which summons us from that sight is bidden to depart as an intruder; the thought of pleasure or ease is a mockery. Hours may pass, but we are insensible to time; we have but one feeling, one longing, even the yearning, of that unutterable sympathy, which, if God would permit, would enable us thankfully to bear the agony ourselves, so that one we loved might be spared.

And this week is counted by our Saviour's dying hours. Not only when He hung upon the Cross on Calvary, but when He walked the streets of Jerusalem, and mingled with the crowds in the Temple, Death waited at His side. When He parted from His friends at Bethany, it whispered that only one night more and He would be alone, forsaken of all, betrayed by Judas, denied by Peter. When He entered the city of Jerusalem, it pointed out the streets through which he would be hurried whilst dragged from the hall of Pilate to the palace of Herod. As He ascended the hill of Zion, it told Him that—one more day—and He should ascend another hill, bearing the Cross on which He was to suffer; and when He stood in the Temple and cleansed it from its outward pollution, Death bade Him mark the veil which was to be torn asunder as the last cry was

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uttered with which He should render up His Soul to God.

X — Life to our Saviour during this week was death. What shall it be to us?

Is it possible that the world can be the same to us to-day as on other days? Is there no sadness over it? no brooding sorrow such as that which settles upon our homes when God's hand is laid upon one of our treasures, and we fast, and weep, and pray, unknowing whether the Lord will be gracious to us that our loved one should live? Then, indeed, we have but little cause for wonder if, when we kneel in Church to express our outward sorrow and repentance, and acknowledge ourselves to be the inheritance which our Redeemer, as at this time, purchased with His most Precious Blood, the words should come to us as formal matters of course, and the first wandering glance of our

eye, the first unwonted tone that strikes our ear, should bring to us the frivolities of the world, and fill the inmost Sanctuary of our hearts with cold, irreverent thoughts, unmeet—oh! who can say how sadly, how grievously, unmeet?—for the presence of our crucified Lord.

Years steal on, and each, as it brings the Holy Week before us, gives us an opportunity of examining ourselves to see what progress we are making in learning sympathy with our Saviour's sufferings.

Time was, perhaps, when we scarcely thought of them at all. The Holy Week was but the preparation for Easter—a season which the world, as well as the Church, has chosen for holiday and rejoicing. We passed through it with a vague feeling that we ought to be grave, but that we could not be unhappy. That may have been the time of early child-

hood. But the feeling could not last. As we grew older—as our minds opened and our knowledge increased—we felt that the season could not be thus forgotten. Either it must be observed or neglected,—in either case by our own choice. Probably this consciousness fretted us. The business and enjoyments of life were crowding upon us, and we could not give them up; it was inconvenient.

We had no time to go to Church, no leisure to say more prayers than usual. We could make preparations for Easter, for mirth and feasting, for a gayer dress or a holiday scheme, but we had no thoughts to spare for Good Friday. That was a period of struggle, of contest between holiness and sin, between the Spirit of God and the spirit of evil. Our own will alone could decide it. How it has been decided, each must answer for himself.

But should the choice have been

determined, though ever so feebly, in favor of Him who died for us, let us kneel before Him in unutterable thankfulness, praying Him that year by year, Holy Week by Holy Week, we may so steadily, patiently, and hopefully practise ourselves in the thoughts and actions which lead us to feel and understand His sufferings, that at last when He enters the Temple of our hearts in the week of His bitter agony, He may find there nought but the humble, intense, devoted love which is the only tribute of sympathy that man can offer to his Saviour.

Wednesday Before Easter.

ST. MATTHEW, Chap. xxiv. 8.—“ And, as He sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto Him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world ? ”

IT would not be easy for us to discover by ourselves the different events which took place on each day of the Holy Week. It would require much time and trouble, and we should be obliged to study very carefully the histories of the four Gospels. But some persons have taken this trouble. They have felt it to be so important to understand clearly even the slightest events which occurred at this season, that they have made

a careful examination of the subject; and from their inquiries we are able to trace with much probability the occurrences of each succeeding day.

We may then venture to imagine, without presumption, how our Lord condescended to employ this day—the day but one before his crucifixion. It was, like the whole course of His life, spent in doing good; but, as when men are about to die they call around them their children and their friends, and advise and warn them, so our Blessed Master, after walking in the Temple, and for the last time instructing the Jews publicly, went forth with His disciples to the Mount of Olives, that He might there hold with them more intimate private communion.

Very striking were the scenes which the eye might behold from that mountain, commanding, not only the view of the city of Jerusalem,

but of the southern portion of Judea. When standing on the middle summit, the dark, still waters of the Dead Sea were to be seen,—its shores without trees, or grass, or flowers, barren and desolate. From thence, too, might be perceived the town of Bethlehem, nestling amidst hills and high rocks; and beyond it, villages scattered amidst pleasant groves and open plains. Jericho might also be discovered from that spot, at the foot of a range of hills, so rugged that they seemed to overhang the town; whilst around it spread beautiful gardens and groves of palms, and a country rich with honey and balsam, and the sugar-cane, and every production of the earth necessary for human life. A dreary region lay between Jericho and Jerusalem—the region through which the traveller was journeying whom our Lord described as falling amongst thieves;

but the course of the Jordan through the plains might be traced by the fresh green grass which covered its banks, carrying on the eye, till far beyond, towards the north, it rested upon the lofty summit forming the highest part of the mountains of Gilead.

Desolate though it now is, surely that must once have been a beautiful land, the glory of all lands. Beautiful it must have been on the day when our Blessed Redeemer gazed upon a portion of it, as He sat upon the mountain with His disciples for the last time before His death.

But His thoughts were not as our thoughts, neither were His words like ours.

They were not those of regret for earth, its beauty, its riches, and its honors; not of all that He had endured since first He humbled Himself to become a little Child, and vouch-

safed to dwell amongst men ; neither were they of the sufferings which He was so soon to bear.

He told of future days, of years to come.

“And as some spake of the Temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, He said, As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom : and great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences ; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from Heaven. And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains ; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out ; and let not them

that are in the countries enter there-into. For there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

It was an awful prophecy, and the hearts of those who heard it must have failed with fear as they thought of "those things which were coming upon the earth." Within forty years after that time "Zion had become a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation; the Holy and the Beautiful House where God was praised was burned with fire, and all the pleasant things of the land of Judah had become waste."

Once more the Saviour of the world foretold what should hereafter be. He said—"But in those days, after that

tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars of Heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in Heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of Man, coming in the clouds of Heaven with great power and glory. And then shall He send His angels, and shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of Heaven."

The destruction of Jerusalem was a type or figure of the destruction of the world.

As surely as the prophecy against Jerusalem was fulfilled, even to the least particular, so surely will the prophecy of the end of the world at length be brought to pass.

But when? Will it be this day, or to-morrow, or in the coming year, or when ages have gone by, and the bodies of those who now live upon the

earth shall long have mouldered in their graves? "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man." Then it may be we shall say to ourselves, the Judgment is far off, there is no need to think upon it yet.

But let us consider. The time which our Blessed Saviour chose to give this warning to His disciples was when He had but one day more in which to be with them before His Death. They were then words spoken, as it were, upon a death-bed. And they were repeated, not once, but many times in many different forms. The parable of the evil servant who said in his heart, "my lord delayeth his coming," uttered the same voice. The history of the foolish virgins, in whose lamp was found no oil, was followed by the solemn words, "Watch ye, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh."

80. WEDNESDAY BEFORE EASTER.

The story of the servants who received their talents, every one according to his several ability, told also that after a long time the lord of those servants would come and reckon with them. And the last of the awful warnings then given pictured that tremendous scene which shall accompany the destruction of a sinful world.

“And when Jesus had finished these sayings, He said unto His disciples, Ye know that after two days is the Feast of the Passover, and the Son of Man is betrayed to be crucified.” These words must have been the seal set upon all that had gone before. They must have written them upon the hearts of the disciples, even as if “graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever.” And in after years, when “destitute, afflicted, tormented,” they wandered from city to city, memory doubtless must often have recalled that scene upon the

Mount of Olives; and the voice of their crucified Saviour must have echoed in their ears as a warning from the grave, "Watch, therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord shall come."

It was a warning of love for them, and has it no message to us? Those overwhelming descriptions of the Judgment Day are the Saviour's legacy to a guilty world. Woe be to us if we disregard them!

We speak of Christianity as a message of love and pardon; we talk of God as a Gracious Father, of Jesus as a Loving Saviour. Most true, most precious are the words. Yet, standing upon the brink of death, and gazing beyond it, with full, clear vision, into eternity, our Lord showed His love, even as we sinful, frail human creatures so often long to show ours — by words, which should be a safeguard and a remembrance in the hour of temptation and peril.

Life and death, Heaven and Hell, were in the balance. The merciful kindness even of an all-merciful Saviour could not then be silent, more especially since Judas, we may believe, was amongst those who sat upon the Mount of Olives; and the warnings then given must have been the last which he ever received from his Lord. And with what earnestness were they uttered! As we think of them in connection with our present life, comforts surrounding us,—warmth, brightness, friends, employments, amusements,—every hour bringing its pleasure or its task, and care for this world creeping into our hearts, and nestling there, as though it claimed to be loved and cherished,—we can only, by a great effort, bring ourselves to a full understanding of the intensity, the agony of feeling, that is conveyed in them.

But let us carry ourselves away for

a few moments to that quiet scene upon the Mount of Olives,—the Saviour seated, with His disciples, upon the green slope, the country outstretched beneath them, the city, glorious and grand, rising up immediately before them,—and near it, close to it, yet without its walls, an object, present then to the eye of Jesus, though hidden from that of His disciples—the Cross reared on Calvary, upon which He was about to die.

“Watch, therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.”

Can the words fall powerless upon our ears? Will they not rather haunt us as the last cry of a departing spirit—the anguished prayer of a soul whose love has expended in them the fears and the affection of a life? Will they not be with us when we go to our rest this night, and when we rise to our labor to-morrow? If thoughts of vanity, feelings of impatience, long-

ings of indolent rest, discontented repinings, weak waverings of purpose, self-conceit, insincerity, passion, evil imaginations, proud wilfulness, knock at our hearts, and demand admission, will not a guard be set there to whisper "watch?" On this week, if on no other week, this day, if on no other day, shall we not remember the last admonition of our Redeemer?

And let us remember that these words can never be really forgotten. Each time that we open our Bibles, and read them as recorded there,—each time that parents, or friends, or teachers may recall them to us, each day that the Minister of God proclaims them to us in the House of God, the Angel of the Most High registers them in Heaven, to be a witness for us or against us in the great Day of Judgment.

And yet more awful. Nothing that has ever been done, or said, or

thought, by the least and meanest of those Beings whom God has endued with a living soul, can actually cease to be.

There is an evidence of this truth given us in our daily experience. Words, looks, scenes long gone by, and, as we term it, forgotten, for years, rise up suddenly and unsought, called forth from what we had considered their graves, by the scent of a flower, the tone of a voice, the notes of a song, the quick glance of an eye. Where had they slept during those silent years? Why should they thus appear, passing phantom-like before us, to vanish again, and be as if they had never been?

It is one of the deep mysteries of our nature. The wisest have failed to solve it satisfactorily. But the Word of Truth, when it warns us that God shall bring "every secret work into judgment," does but give

the consequence of the solemn fact thus brought home from time to time to our senses, that nothing which has once been can cease to be, either in the sight of God or in our own consciousness. And as the drowning man, when about to pass into eternity, sees the whole course of his life, in one lightning glance, brought before him; so may it be with us when the voice of the Archangel shall summon us to our last account.

The words, then, the thoughts, the feelings, which are present to us during this Holy Week, will be present to us again when we stand before the presence of our Judge, to receive our final sentence. It is for each of us to ask himself whether they will appear in blessing or in condemnation. The Disciples of Christ, one only excepted, could doubtless live again, without self-reproach, through that hour of painful happiness, when they sat

with the Master whom they so dearly loved, upon the Mount of Olives. Weak though they afterwards showed themselves to be, their hearts were His devotedly; and in afflictions and necessities, in stripes and imprisonments, in watchings and fastings, in bonds, imprisonment, and death, they testified the sincerity of their love. But for us—can it, will it be the same?

All will perhaps tremble at the answer. Yet in this very feeling of awe and misgiving lies our hope.

The hour is not yet past,—the Holy Week is not over. We may have been cold, remiss, negligent, but there is still the opportunity for amendment. A prayer may rise this day in the secrecy of our chambers, which shall receive its answer when before men and angels we stand accepted and forgiven by the Loving Saviour, to whom, for the first time, we have

offered our whole heart. A tear of sorrowing sympathy may this day be shed, which shall be acknowledged and blessed when, in the depth of our humiliation, we bow before the Throne of our Maker, owning only our hardness and indifference. Before this night shall close over our heads, an effort may be made against a fault, which shall bear its fruit in the victorious, though life-long struggle against sin, and find its reward in the glorious Crown of the redeemed servants of Christ.

One thing only need we fear—despair of our own improvement.

If the Disciples, as in their trembling love they hung upon their Master's words, had been able to foresee the boldness and constancy with which they should one day preach the glad tidings of the Gospel before the indignant Jew and the scoffing Gentile, in the populous city and the

wild haunts of barbarism, they would have felt that nothing but a miracle from Heaven could have thus converted their timidity into courage, their weakness into strength. And they would have felt rightly. But the miracle which awaited them is ready also for us.

Once dedicated to God at our Baptism, once set forth on the way which leadeth to Eternal Life, we have but to claim our privileges, and for Christ's sake they will be given.

Not, perhaps, at once, not without many pangs of self-reproach, many hours, even days, weeks, months, of what may seem to us lukewarmness. But no one ever prayed earnestly that he might be enabled to obey and love his Lord, and failed to be heard.

For the prayer which we would fain offer for ourselves, is but the infinitely feeble echo of one which was offered for us long centuries gone by;

and is still, we may not doubt, pleaded in our behalf before the Throne of Grace.

The prophecies of coming terror were not the parting words of Christ; He had other things to say, but they were kept for those who had so deeply pondered upon fear that nothing remained to them but love.

God grant that we also may so lay to heart the warnings uttered upon the Mount of Olives, that we may have our part in the prayer which rose up to Heaven as our Redeemer went forth to His agony in the Garden of Gethsemane.

“I pray for them,—I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given me; for they are Thine. Holy Father; keep through Thine own Name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one as We are.

“I pray not that thou shouldest

take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil. O, righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee: but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent Me.

“And I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”

Thursday Before Easter.

ST. MATTHEW, Chap. xxvi. 36.—“Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto His disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.”

IT is not difficult in ordinary life to imagine how any one day will pass. For those whose homes are quiet and retired, who are not moving much in the business or gayeties of the world, to-day will probably be like yesterday,—to-morrow will be like to-day.

A difference, indeed, in many cases there may be, we may trust there will be, between this week and those which we expect to follow it; but still the difference is not such as would at first

sight be very marked. Our Church Services are indeed more frequent; and most of us, who have any thought of religion, have probably endeavored to attend them, if not every day, yet at least as frequently as possible; we may also have endeavored to gain more time for private devotion, and may have denied ourselves some of the useless luxuries and unnecessary comforts in which at other seasons we indulge: but, in other respects, the general routine of our lives has most likely been unaltered. The hours have passed quietly,—there has been employment for each. And now we have reached the fifth day in the Holy Week. We will think of it as nearly ended, and look back upon its course.

Morning, then, has come to us with its freshness of beauty, and vigor of purpose; and noonday has brought its brightness, and its busi-

ness ; and evening has stolen upon us with the sad glory of the sunset sky, and the chastened thoughts which revert, as if by instinct, to the joys that will never return ; and now it is night.

Evening and night are the times when men usually meet together for recreation. Possibly on this night there will be few to join in gayety ; we will consider rather how its hours will be spent in the bosom of our own families.

That would indeed be a home of wretchedness where there was not some comfortable shelter from the midnight air, some food to support the weakened body, some couch on which to rest the weary limbs ; and many of us have probably gathered around us all that affluence can contribute for ease and enjoyment. An English home, above all others, brings few thoughts of discomfort or privation.

And the employments of this evening, what are they most likely to be? Easy work, quiet reading, and conversation. There may be less mirth than usual—a sense of something grave and earnest may have stolen over us; but our deeper thoughts of devotion are kept for our own chambers, and when we meet together, even in our homes, we allow but few evidences of such thoughts to be perceived.

Time passes on; it is late: the appointed hour of rest is come. There are soft, warm beds prepared for us; and sleep is sent in mercy from on high. The occupations of the evening are put aside. Prayer is offered up for the pardon and favor of God, and the parting wish of all is for a good night,—a night safe under the protection of the Almighty, and blest with the blessing of repose.

When the deep church-clock strikes

the hour of midnight,—when the earth is still and silent—when stars shine out in the dark heavens, and the moon emerges from amidst fleecy clouds, throwing a pale light upon rocks and trees, and tracing a silvery path upon the sea,—all are at rest.

This night is a night in the Holy Week.

In the country of Judea, in a narrow valley at the foot of the Mount of Olives, lies the Garden of Gethsemane;—the brook Kedron, a narrow stream, flows by it; the lofty mountain rises behind it; before it are the walls of Jerusalem.

Night steals upon the earth in that distant land even as it steals upon us. Labor ceases; the sound of human voices, the noise of a great city, is hushed; men sink wearily upon their couches, whilst the moon and the stars shine full and bright; and the cutting wind rushes over the hills,

and moans drearily through the trees of the Olive Garden.

More than eighteen hundred years ago, the Saviour of the World passed this night in the Garden of Gethsemane.

The Holy Gospels give us minute details of the events, crowded into the space of a few short hours. They tell us of the assembling of our Blessed Lord and His disciples in the upper room, of the institution of that Holy Sacrament which is the highest of Christian privileges, of the Saviour's great act of humility in washing His disciples' feet, of the warning given to Judas, the departure of the traitor to betray his Master, and the prophecy so mercifully vouchsafed to St. Peter to guard him against the hour of temptation.

It will be better that the scene which immediately followed should be described in the very words of the Bible.

“And He came out, and went, as He was wont, to the Mount of Olives; and His disciples also followed Him. And, when He was at the place, He said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation. And He was withdrawn from them about a stone’s cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, saying, Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me: nevertheless, not My will, but Thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto Him from Heaven, strengthening Him. And being in an agony, He prayed more earnestly; and His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground. And when He rose up from prayer, and was come to His disciples, He found them sleeping for sorrow, and said unto them, Why sleep ye? Rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.”

We will think upon these words

silently. God alone knows their full meaning.

But the Gospels tell us much more of the events of this awful night. It was not as other nights. That still, quiet garden was no place of safety, for the enemies of Christ were seeking Him.

In the darkness, lighted by torches and lanthorns, they came—a great multitude. The Chief Priests were there—they whose duty it was to perform the solemn service of the Temple; and the Scribes and the Elders also, who were set over the people to instruct them. And he was there—the traitor, Judas—who had sat with Christ that same night at supper;—Judas, whose feet the Lord had washed—Judas, who had betrayed Him with a kiss.

“And they laid their hands on Him, and took Him. And one of them that stood by drew a sword,

and smote a servant of the High Priest, and cut off his ear. And Jesus answered, and said, Suffer ye thus far. And He touched his ear, and healed him."

Then all the disciples forsook Him, and fled. All? Was there not one left? not one to aid Him in His hour of trial? not one to wait upon Him, to look upon Him with sorrow, to weep because He was in misery? "And they all forsook Him, and fled."

It was night in the city. Hundreds were sleeping peacefully,—hundreds were dreaming of the next day's toil or pleasure, unknowing that before another night should arrive, the Lord of Heaven and Earth would, for their sakes, have humbled Himself even to the death upon the Cross.

The Redeemer—unthought of by the world, left by His friends—was alone in the midst of His enemies.

They took Him first to Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas; and from the house of Annas they bore Him, bound as a captive, to the palace of the High Priest.

In the Hall of the wicked Caiaphas, the long hours of that terrible night were spent. So often have the scenes which there took place been described to us, that the history seems like a familiar tale; but once again we will recur to it, to carry away a thought for ourselves. From the description given of the High Priest's Hall, it appears to have been a large room raised at the upper end, as we sometimes see, even in these days, in public buildings. There the Chief Priests assembled, and the High Priest questioned our Lord.

Below, at the further extremity, were the servants and attendants gathered together around the fire—the only light which brightened the

distant end of the great Hall. They sat there watching; but, oh! how little understanding what was passing before them! And with them were others, more deeply interested, knowing far better all that depended upon the issue of that solemn mockery of a trial, but not daring to acknowledge the anguish of their hearts; and gazing, as on a sight to which they were accustomed and indifferent, upon the humiliation of their Lord.

St. John and St. Peter had alike forsaken Jesus in the first moment of terror, but both afterwards returned to follow Him; St. Peter, indeed, afar off, for fear was powerful with him still, as he saw his Master dragged helplessly away by the ruthless multitude. But love conquered for the time. When St. John, who was known to the High Priest, entered with his Lord into the Hall, St. Peter stood without; and when his fellow-

disciple, perceiving him, made interest with the woman who kept the door, and admittance was offered, he ventured at once into the scene of danger; and the two disciples together "sat with the servants to see the end."

Yes, they saw and heard all. As they looked towards the further extremity of the Hall, where their Lord was standing in the midst of His cruel enemies, they must have seen Him in bonds,—they must have heard the scoffs, the taunts, the mocking questions; and the thought of what the issue might be, must have seemed more ominous—more terrible.

The heart of St. Peter might have failed him then, yet his anxiety was too great to enable him to depart. He still sat amongst the servants, perhaps unconsciously trusting to his own courage to support him. And the woman who kept the door, who had admitted him, and doubtless at

the same moment had marked him, drew near ; and, assisted probably by the light which fell upon his face, she earnestly gazed upon him, and turning to those who were near, she said, "This man was with Him ;" adding afterwards to St. Peter himself, "Art not thou also one of this Man's disciples ?"

"But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest ; and he went out into the porch."

"And the cock crew."

The common sound had a special message—a voice of warning for St. Peter. But the present moment occupied all his attention ; he thought not of the past nor of the future. The woman spake again, though Peter had withdrawn himself from notice. A second time she repeated to the group gathered round the fire, "This man also is one of them." And with her there was now joined a fellow-

servant, who added, "This man was also with Jesus of Nazareth."

But the observation seems to have attracted no notice. It might be that the scene in the upper end of the Hall was absorbing every attention. And soon St. Peter, finding himself unmarked, and suffering from the chillness of the midnight air, stole again into the apartment, and standing—not sitting, as before, amongst the servants, for his uneasiness seems to have made him too restless for such a posture—warmed himself at the fire.

He had a thought for his own comfort. Yet what was there passing before his eyes?

"And the men that held Jesus mocked Him, and smote Him. And some began to spit on Him, and to cover His Face, and to buffet Him; and others smote Him with the palms of their hands, saying, Prophecy unto

us, Thou Christ: Who is he that smote Thee?"

"And Peter stood by the fire, and warmed himself!" They noticed him once more—the maid by whom he had first been admitted into the Hall—her companion, who had joined in accusing him—and the servants who were assembled with him—all noticed him. They no longer remarked one to the other upon his presence; they turned to him, and one amongst them said, "Art not thou also one of His disciples?" And Peter said, "Man, I am not." And then he added, with an oath, "I know not the Man."

Shall we venture to imagine the feelings of St. Peter at this moment? He was in the midst of enemies. Twice he had been upon the point of detection, and the loving Master to whom, in other moments, he would have turned instinctively for protection, was standing helpless, and a

prisoner, before the Priests and Elders.

We are accustomed now to own our Saviour's Divinity; we know that His humiliation was voluntary, that in one moment He could have summoned to His aid twelve legions of angels; we can, therefore, little understand the trial of faith which the scene then present must have been to the ardent but unstable Peter. As he beheld Him whom he had believed and confessed to be the Son of the Eternal God, buffeted and mocked and spit upon, the Tempter cast a cloud over his faith, his confidence in the power of his Master was shaken, and, feeling his own weakness, he withdrew to the darker parts of the Hall, where he might hope to escape further observation.

But it is in vain to avoid external occasions of temptation, unless the heart also be right with God. Our

danger is from within. When we are ready to deny Christ, the opportunity for doing so will seldom be wanting.

An hour went by. It seems that the fears of the Apostle were again for a season lulled. An hour without notice or detection!—it might have seemed there was no more danger.

Yet it would appear that he did not again venture into the light. He mingled with the servants, and joined in their conversation; but he no longer placed himself in a position in which his countenance could be seen. He forgot that there were other means of detection besides the glare of the blazing fire.

“They that stood by came and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them, for thy speech betrayeth thee.” He was a Galilean, and the accent upon his words—the peculiar dialect

of his province—was the token that he was the friend of Jesus of Nazareth in Galilee. The remark was especially made by one who had good cause to remember the apostle. The kinsman of Malchus, whose ear Peter, in his zeal, had cut off, came forward to bear his witness to the truth of the accusation. “Did I not see thee in the garden with Him?” was the question to which there seemed but one reply.

“Then began Peter to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the Man.”

“And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew! And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord how He had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.”

Doubtless, his was a grievous sin ;

doubtless, also, his was a deep repentance ; for ever, through his life long, as Peter heard the cock crow, it is said that he fell on his knees, and wept, and prayed for pardon.

“Blessed the tears,” saith St. Ambrose, “which wash away guilt. They at length mourn on whom Jesus looks. Peter denied the first time, and wept not, because the Lord looked not on him. He denied a second time, and wept not ; for as yet the Lord had not looked on him. He denied also a third time : Jesus looked on him, and he wept most bitterly.

“Lord Jesus, look on us, that we may know how to weep for our sin, and wash out the guilt.”

It is a prayer which may well rise from every heart. How far the sin of St. Peter has been ours, each must answer for himself now by strict self-examination, or wait to discover it when every secret thought and action

shall be made known before the Judgment Seat of God. Want of moral courage is among the most common, the most easily excused, of human failings; and, perhaps, at times, when conscience has reproached us for false excuses, prevarications, pretences, the effect of our weakness, we have dwelt with somewhat of comfort upon the recollection that such also was the sin of the great Apostle who afterwards laid down his life for his Lord.

But we may grievously deceive ourselves by such a comparison. If the weakness which caused St. Peter's fall was great, yet greater was the affection which led him to place himself in the way of temptation. Before we compare our cowardice with his, let us first compare our love. What is it? Have we followed Christ this day, even afar off? Have we journeyed with Him, as it were, hour by

hour, minute by minute, towards death? Are our hearts now full of sympathy for His sufferings, or bent only upon passing through a time of gloom with the greatest ease to ourselves? St. Peter, indeed, denied Christ; but he sat with Him at supper—he followed Him to the scene of His Agony—he lifted up his hand to save Him from His enemies—and when for a few minutes he left Him in terror, he returned to be present at the scene of His humiliation. Once only are we told that he had a thought for his own gratification: it was just before his fall.

Peter stood and warmed himself! It was no sin; it was the natural instinct—the almost unconscious avoidance of suffering which belonged to his very being as a man. But it was an indication of what was at that moment the state of his mind. As his faith grew weak, his love grew faint;

and whilst a witness of his Saviour's sufferings, he still was able to take thought for his own comfort.

Rest and sleep are this night awaiting us, and few among us, probably, are in any way able to dispense with them. Yet there is one consideration which it may be well for us to carry with us to our repose.

Our soft beds, our warm coverings, our easy pillows—there is no sin in them. God has granted us the means of ease; we may accept them, and bless Him as their Giver.

But to-night, when the Lord of Heaven knelt on the hard earth, beneath the open sky;—to-night, when His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground;—to-night, when he stood in the Hall of Caiaphas, and was buffeted, and mocked, and spat upon—shall comfort be our first thought?

114 THURSDAY BEFORE EASTER.

Then let us take heed lest we be not far from denying Him.

For more than eighteen centuries there have been those who have marked this anniversary with solemn prayer—with fasting, and weeping, and mourning, in remembrance of the Friend dearer than all other friends—in recollection of the love that passeth all human love.

How we shall keep it, God only will know. The human eye sees only quietness, comfort, and rest. Perhaps it may be well that it should be so. But in the sight of the Eternal Saviour, now looking upon us from Heaven, surely there must be sadness, and sorrow, and tears—even the anguish of a bitter repentance—for the sins which were the cause of His Agony. And if, in the infirmity of our nature, the hardships of outward humiliation are denied us, and warmth, and food, and sleep are re-

quired for the duties of the morrow, is there one among us who will not pray that he may hallow them by the remembrance of the cold night-winds in the Garden of Gethsemane, and the exhaustion of the long, long hours in the Hall of Caiaphas, and the suffering which was to find but one rest—the rest of Death upon the Cross?

1851/143.
Good Friday.

ST. LUKE, Chap. xxiii. 38.—“And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him.”

GOOD FRIDAY! We have looked for it from the gloom of Ash Wednesday, through the dreariness of Lent, and the sorrow of the Holy Week. The thought of it has been the close of every meditation, the support of every prayer, the under-current flowing beneath all our worldly occupations. It has been impossible to forget it. Now it has come. How are we prepared to meet it?

When we awoke this morning to the light of a new day, our thoughts,

probably, turned instinctively to the anniversary we are called upon to commemorate. We could not rest at ease in our beds: there was a voice within us which bade us rise, and remember the Garden of Gethsemane and the Cross of Calvary. But human imagination is very weak; it is soon overpowered by the things we see and hear; and whether we looked forth upon the thoroughfares of a crowded city, or the calm beauty of some quiet country village, there will have been enough to distract our thoughts, and bid us forget that to-day all pleasures, hopes, feelings, memories of earth are to be put away, lost in the one overwhelming thought that the Lord of Heaven is about to die.

It will be well for us, for a few moments, to face this awful truth fully, clearly, soberly. There can be no excited feeling in a thought so

unutterably beyond our power of comprehension. Human suffering and human power rouse us to a tumult of emotion. In the Presence of the Majesty of the Most High there is a great calm.

But Christ is merciful to our infirmities. He has veiled Himself in a human form, and now, "made like unto us in all things, sin only excepted," we may venture to be with Him in imagination in the last hours of His mortal life, as we pray that He may be with us in blessed reality when we are summoned forth, by the sentence of Adam's condemnation, to meet the "death which has passed upon all men."

Whilst we have been resting in our beds, or preparing ourselves, albeit with grave and chastened thoughts, for the services of the day, there has been much to recall to mind, much to win us to sad and penitent medi-

tation. Through the long night, our Blessed Lord was mocked in the Hall of Caiaphas; when morning dawned, He was dragged before the tribunal of the Roman Governor, and from thence sent to be mocked by Herod and his men of war.

At the hour of six, Pilate sat upon his judgment-seat, and after hearing the accusations against Jesus, and publicly pronouncing Him innocent, delivered him over to death.

Oh! fearful contrast between our lot and His! We in our peaceful homes, happy in the midst of our friends, at ease even with the restraint of our petty self-denials;—and He? Let us nerve ourselves to think for a few minutes what He is about to bear. The cries of the multitude have been heard. Barabbas has been released, and Jesus given up to His enemies. They have borne Him forth in their savage triumph,

and on Him they have laid the Cross. He is faint with the exhaustion of the night: His back is furrowed with the stripes of the scourge; the wounds of the Crown of Thorns are yet bleeding on His brow. But they lay the heavy Wood upon Him, and He bends under the weight, whilst still they follow Him with their jeers and scoffs; and their taunting words ring in His ears, as in weakness and weariness He drags His fainting steps towards the gate of the city.

An open space lies beyond at the summit of the Hill of Calvary. It has been marked by death already. The skulls and bones of those who have beforetime on that spot endured the last fatal punishment lie whitening on the ground. It is the "place called Golgotha,"—the Charnel-house, the "place of a skull." Thither is Christ to be led. But His enfeebled body is crushed by the burden which

He bears. If relief be not at hand,
He may sink before that hideous resting-place is reached.

His executioners have paused in their course, and the rush of the eager multitude has been stopped. They have taken the Cross from Him, and laid it upon Simon the Cyrenian, to bear it after Him. And now again they urge their victim forward, supporting themselves His flagging steps, and leading forth with Him two malefactors, justly condemned, and with whom He is to be numbered as a transgressor.

Is the Saviour of the World alone? —
He who comforted the widowed mother when her son was borne to his burial, He who wept over the grave of his friend Lazarus, who suffered the Beloved John to lean upon His breast at supper, who prayed for His Disciples when He went forth to His Agony, and remembered Peter

in the hour of temptation,—is He alone?

God, the Almighty, the Maker of Heaven and Earth, He is indeed; but He has made Himself our Brother, He has clothed Himself with human affections. He cannot thus be left to die, and none to weep for Him.

“There followed him a great company of people and of women, which also bewailed and lamented.”

Yes, there are tears and wailings—the wailing as of a woman that mourneth for her only son, the bitterness as of one that is in bitterness for her first-born. But that sorrow cannot soothe the heart of the Redeemer. “He did not strive nor cry; neither did any man hear His voice in the streets,” when it might have been raised to save Himself. But now He can turn His weary Head towards the ignorant yet sympathizing women who follow Him; and it may be that His words

of prophecy, uttered in sadness of spirit against those whom He would die to save, will be remembered by them in after years, and work in them faith which shall bring them to salvation. "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"

At length there is a last pause—for the summit of Calvary is reached. It would seem that the Saviour's strength is exhausted, and the soldiers offer him wine, mingled with myrrh. But it can scarcely be in mercy; it will but the better enable Him to

bear His torture ; and refined in their cruelty, they have made it loathsome. "They gave Me gall to eat ; and when I was thirsty, they gave Me vinegar to drink." It is tasted, but refused. It may be that He who has given Himself up thus voluntarily to suffer, will not, by any act of His own, mitigate His pain. He wills to drink the Cup of His Father's wrath even to the dregs. And He has strength—such strength as His persecutors deem not of. Torture Him as they may, until His hour is come He must needs endure.

"The fire and the wood are ready, so also is the Lamb for a burnt offering."

"And they crucified Him." It was the third hour,—according to our reckoning of time, the hour of nine, when we perhaps are meeting our friends at our first meal, or preparing ourselves for our Church services by quiet reading or meditation.

"They crucified Him." A Latin writer sets forth in simple words that form of death. "Hanging upon the wood, attached to it with nails driven through their hands and feet, they were killed by a protracted death, and lived a long time on the Cross, not because a longer life was an object of choice, but because death itself was lengthened, that their pain might not be too soon ended."

Too soon! When He laid Himself down upon that hard couch, and stretched out His Sacred Hands, and felt the agonizing shoot of pain thrill through His worn Body, could it be too soon?

"Oh! wherefore is light given to Him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul, which long for death but it cometh not, and dig for it more than for hid treasures?"

No; it cometh not yet. There are six long hours before Him, into each

moment of which an eternity of sorrow will be condensed, for He is bearing the punishment of a world ; and still, in the keenest moment of His Agony, the thought of that redemption is present to Him, and the first words which escape from His lips are a prayer : “ Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

Doubtless that prayer will prevail mightily with God—mightily beyond every prayer. If others, which were but its types, were heard because of their faint similitude,—if Jonah was listened to when he spoke from the belly of the whale, and Daniel when he cried unto God from the den of lions, and the three children from the midst of the furnace, and Hezekiah from his bed of sickness,—much more shall the Saviour of the world be heard from the Cross of Torment. Only let us not forget the plea that is set forth—“ they know not what they

do." It could be made for the deceived Jew, the ignorant Roman—will even a Redeemer's love be able to offer it for the instructed, enlightened Christian? Lord, have mercy upon us unto whom much knowledge is given, for of us shall much be required.

And now they have done their worst; and there is no more torture to add to the body, but the increasing anguish of a lingering death. Yet there is one craving in the human breast, intense and universal: it is for quietness when the Spirit is departing.

The Redeemer's Couch of agony is laid in the public thoroughfare. The traveller can gaze upon Him as he passes by; the man full of worldly business can pause for a moment to dwell upon a spectacle so terrible and exciting; and the careless and listless can join with the multitude, and make

their comments upon the title which Pilate has set up—"Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." It excites their indignation. They have rejected Him, and now it would seem that He is forced upon them. But the Roman Governor is deaf to their murmurs. Angry with them because angry with himself for his weakness in consenting to the death of the innocent, he is inexorable. "What he has written he has written;" and so the claim of the Blessed Saviour is made in characters indelible as the fatal handwriting on the wall of the palace of Babylon, and Pilate himself becomes, as it were, the first Apostle to the Greek, the Roman, and the Hebrew, proclaiming "Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews!"

At the foot of the Cross the soldiers gather, to part His garments among them, and divide His vesture. They cast lots for His seamless coat, the

type of the Unity of His Church ; and then, weary probably with their cruel work, they rest themselves, sitting upon the ground to watch Him, whilst the people stand gazing upon Him, and the passers-by shake their heads, saying, "Thou that destroyest the Temple, and buildest it in three days, save Thyself. If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the Cross." The rulers also stand at a distance, not choosing, it may be, to mingle with the common people in their scoffs ; but, speaking amongst themselves, they say, "He saved others ; Himself He cannot save. If He be the King of Israel, let Him come down now from the Cross, and we will believe Him."

Awful and portentous words ! for the hour cometh, and now is, when He shall indeed come down, and "every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him."

But as yet their mockeries are unnoticed. The voice of Jesus is silent ; but from the depths of His wounded Spirit, surely we may believe the prayers uttered in prophecy, long years before, ascend to His Father's Throne,—“O ! go not from Me, for trouble is hard at hand, and there is none to help Me. Thy rebuke hath broken My heart ; I am full of heaviness. I looked for some to have pity on Me ; but there was no man, neither found I any to comfort Me. Take Me out of the mire, that I sink not. O ! let Me be delivered from them that hate Me, and out of the deep waters.”

Deliverance is not as yet for Him ; but there is another, suffering by His side, who is to date from that hour the thanksgivings of Eternity. “And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on Him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But

the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." "The Cross," saith St. Augustine, "is the Tribunal of Christ. He is set as the Judge in the midst, between the malefactors; one, who believes, is set free; the other, who reviles, is condemned." And who among us has not felt his heart thrill with longings for the same blessed assurance, when the words "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise" have recurred to his memory?

Yes, on that day—so terrible to the penitent thief in its beginning, so overwhelming in its course, so awful in its close—the long struggle of life

was to end; on that day pain and sorrow were to cease; on that day—oh! joy above all joy, peace which indeed “passeth understanding”—the power of sin was to be overthrown for ever, and the sinner was to rest with his Redeemer in Paradise. Does it seem a reward too great for a confession made in the last hour of trial? Let us consider the sincerity of that conversion, and pray that it may be made our own. Faith, to perceive the Spiritual Kingdom of Christ; Humility, to confess his own unworthiness; reverential Fear, shown in the acknowledgment of God’s judgments; Love, which could tremble for another’s sin;—where shall we seek for stronger proofs of true repentance? Yet well indeed has it been said, “One sinner is converted at the hour of death, that we may hope; and but one, that we may fear.”

But there are those standing by the

Cross of Christ, to whom even the evidence of a Redeemer's love can only add bitterness to grief. So merciful to all save to Himself, most strange, most terrible it seems, that He should suffer. His Mother, and His Mother's Sister, and Mary Magdalene, and the beloved Disciple, have all followed Him—not afar off among the multitude, but stationed near, to catch His failing words, and receive the parting glance of love that cannot die. The weary minutes are passing away, and the hour of great darkness is at hand. Before it shall overtake them, the last act of filial duty is to be performed towards her who bore the Saviour in her Bosom, and guarded Him in the flight to Egypt—who carried Him with her to her home at Nazareth, and watched over Him day by day, as He “increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.” Is

it presumptuous to suppose that the Mother's thoughts may now revert to those bygone days? May not memory recall, in contrast to that scene of present horror, the joys of the tranquil hours when, in His Holy Childhood, the Saviour wandered amid the deep dells, and the silent, solemn paths amid the overhanging rocks around Nazareth; or gazed from the summit of the hill on the vast plain of Esdraelon, and the mountains of Tabor, and Hermon, and Carmel, and the blue waters of the Great Sea? May not the countenance of her Blessed Child, when, in His early strength and His superhuman wisdom, He sat discoursing with the Doctors in the Temple, contrast with the livid Face, now growing sharper and paler as the life-blood streams from His wounded Hands and His pierced Feet?

Oh! well may it be for her that

darkness is about to hide from her eyes His dying agonies ! Happy that she can bear away with her only the remembrance of the look which turns upon her in unutterable affection as the Saviour commits her to the care of the beloved Disciple ! "He saith unto His Mother, Behold thy Son. Then saith He to the Disciple, Behold thy Mother. And from that hour that Disciple took her into his own home." They are words of peace, and they mark with the last ray of light the moments that pass away before, at the sixth hour, the horror of great darkness covers the earth.

With that darkness, a veil also is in a manner drawn over our Lord's sufferings. It seems, indeed, presumptuous in us to attempt to approach, and venture to search into the inscrutable depth of that mighty Woe, as though we had power or thought to fathom it. Rather, re-

membering that it was caused by us, and borne for our sakes, ought we to hear of it with the lowest adoration, and prostration of soul and body,—hiding our eyes, and covering our faces in awe and shame. Yet the words uttered, as the last moment draws near, disclose to us something of the nature and the cause of His mysterious Agony. “And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land till the ninth hour. And, at the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabacthani! which is, being interpreted, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?”

What, in truth, was the unutterable desolation of our Blessed Lord at that moment, we know not. Whether the bitterness of the Cup which He had prayed might pass from Him, if such should be His Father’s will, was condensed into that hour of loneliness

unspeakable, we may not dare to say ; but each of us may receive for himself a thought of comfort, little understood, it may be, in the bright hopefulness of youth, but ready to return, in future years, in hours of pain and weakness. Depression of mind and spiritual desertion are no proofs of the rejection of God. Rather, like bodily sufferings, they form part of that resemblance to our Redeemer, which will, for His sake, render us more acceptable to our Heavenly Father.

Who shall dread the bed of pain, when Jesus hung upon the Cross of agony ? or who shall fear to trust his soul to God, even when the heart is parched and dry, and every holier thought is for the moment lost in the consciousness of suffering, since even the Only-begotten Son of the Eternal Father could exclaim in the greatness of His misery, " My God, My God,

why hast Thou forsaken Me?" It is a cry which meets with no response on earth; it does but add to the mockery of His enemies. The words which might well darken Heaven, and the Heaven of Heavens, and make the earth to shake, to some among them seem but the appeal to Elias to aid Him; and tauntingly they say, "Let be; let us see whether Elias will come to save Him."

That was the deepest anguish: the cup had been drunk even to the dregs. The last prophecy was fulfilled, as the Redeemer exclaimed, "I thirst," and received from the hands of the soldiers the support which before He had refused to accept, and, with the words "It is finished," He proclaimed to the universe that the work for which He came was completed—that man was redeemed.

Human nature had failed; but a power above and beyond nature sup-

ported Him still. With a loud, miraculous cry, He exclaimed, "Father, into Thy Hands I commend My Spirit;" and bowing His head, reclining it as on the Bosom of His God, He gave up the Ghost.

"And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts and returned."

We may number ourselves amongst that people, for we are called also to be present in imagination at that sight. More than in imagination—we are summoned publicly to acknowledge our part in the benefits of the unspeakable sacrifice—to humble ourselves before God, beseeching Him graciously to behold us, "for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was contented to be betrayed, and given up into the hands of wicked men, and to suffer death upon the Cross."

Shall we refuse to answer the call?

Saved this day from Hell, purchased this day for Heaven, can we be cold, stony-hearted, indifferent? Then, indeed, is there a marvel as great as "the breadth, and length, and depth, and height" of God's Love; even "the breadth, and length, and depth, and height" of man's ingratitude.

But our feelings are not in our own power. We shut ourselves up in the silence and solitude of our chambers, and say we will remember our Saviour, and thoughts of the world follow us. We try to dwell upon his suffering, and some petty interest distracts our attention, and drives us back again to consult our own ease. Whilst the long hours go by in which Christ was enduring mockery, and buffeting, and bearing the heavy burden up the hill of Calvary, we are striving, it may be, for a few short moments, to fix our minds upon some thought of His

woe, or some recollection of the sin which was the cause of it. Striving—but failing. Our hearts sink within us, and we turn to the public services of the Church. There we think nothing will be found to disturb our attention; there the earnest words of prayer, the solemn narrative of our Lord's Passion, must, for a while, awaken in us a deeper love.

Oh! if it should be so—if some holier feeling should be stirred within us, let it not again be crucified on the Cross of worldliness and ingratitude! Let imagination, so quick in bringing to us scenes of pleasure, set before us now the torture of that lingering death. Whilst we pray in Church, our Redeemer prayed from the Cross; whilst we sit at ease listening to the words of the preacher, He, in His Agony, thought of the penitent who hung by his side, and the Mother who clung to Him in the desolation of her heart.

While the light of the noonday sun streams upon us, His Soul was wrapped in darkness, and the horror of an unnatural night fell upon the guilty earth. When we return to our homes, to rest for a season, to recruit our strength, or—God grant it may be so!—to spend the quiet moments of leisure in humbling ourselves to the dust before our Saviour, His life-blood is ebbing away, silently, rapidly. When we walk again to Church, refreshed in body, perhaps in some degree cheered in mind, His strength is sinking, and the scoffing soldiers are torturing him with the wine and the hyssop, and His breath is drawn fainter and quicker, and the livid anguish is overspreading His Face. Once more we kneel: there is silence, broken only by the bell which summons others, like ourselves, to the service of the Church. The minutes are marked by its tollings, slow and

solemn. Another moment — they have ceased.

Let us fold our hands, and close our eyes, and pray as we have never prayed before. It is the Saviour's death-knell.

Easter Eve.

HABAKKUK, Chap. iv. 9.—“There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.”

THE longing for rest is a feeling which at first sight seems to belong peculiarly to those who have fully entered upon life. The young, blest in their hopes and eager in their enjoyments, would appear to have little part in a yearning which is the result of pain, sorrow, and disappointment. Yet even to them the stillness of Easter Eve must come with somewhat of a soothing spell—a charm which they cannot desire to break. This is no fancy. If we have in any

degree lived with our Saviour during the preceding days of the Holy Week—if we have followed Him through His scenes of trial, and stood beneath His Cross, and watched His dying Anguish—it is impossible but that on the day of His Rest a calm should steal over us, deep and full as the sudden lull of the Tempest, or the unexpected release from some terrible impending grief.

On the evening of Good Friday we scarcely feel this. There is stillness, indeed; but it is the stillness of exhaustion. The scenes upon which our thoughts have dwelt are yet so vividly before us, that it is only by an effort we can really believe that they are past. We linger beside the Cross, gazing upon the Holy Countenance, rigid in death, and marked with the lines of agony; and the reproaches of conscience become keener as we think how little we have

understood His sorrow—how coldly we have acquiesced in it as an act of atonement for the sins of the world ; forgetting that each petty offence against God's law—petty as it seems to us—committed in the thoughtlessness of youth, added to the intensity of His Pain, and deepened the Cup of His Misery.

And if at times a softer feeling creeps into our hearts—the feeling of love which would fain pour itself out in tears of gratitude—the human thought arises in our mind, that our Saviour is no longer upon earth ;—He has left us, and we are alone. They only who have laid their loved ones in the grave can tell what that loneliness is ;—how, even when we remember the suffering from which they have been released, the selfishness of earthly affection bids us long for them again to return, and tempts us to put aside our thankfulness for their rest,

in the craving for the blessing of their presence.

There is a consolation for that exceeding dreariness, but it is to be found in action rather than in meditation; and, perhaps, amongst all the characters which the Gospel History brings before us as connected with our Blessed Lord, there is none which comes home to us more truly, with a more earnest sense of sympathy, than that of Joseph of Arimathea, when, "as the even was come, he went to Pilate and begged the Body of Jesus, to bury it."

Weak as we feel ourselves to be—wavering, fearful, ashamed to own our Lord in life, and brought to the consciousness of the extent of our love only by the sight of His misery—yet we would gladly, thankfully—has the wish never crossed our minds when reading the Gospel narrative?—have joined with Joseph in

that last sad act of reverence. The tears which we shed would, it seems, have been less bitter when we were permitted to do something for His honor. There would have been comfort in the risk of openly avowing our allegiance before the Roman Governor: our cowardly hearts would have felt that some reparation was still possible; and the affection which, it may be, we should have shrunk from owning before men lest it should be distrusted and reviled, would have poured itself forth in the full tide of repentance, as we knelt by the cold and silent Corpse. We would have bought the fine linen, and taken Him from the Cross, and enwrapped His mangled Body tenderly, reverently; and then we would have borne Him to the Garden, and laid Him in His rocky bed, and "rolled a great stone to the door of the Sepulchre, and departed."

The blessing of lingering by that Hallowed Grave would not be ours. To sit with the two Marys and watch, belongs to those who have loved with an unwearied love, and obeyed with an unflagging devotion. For us there is but solitude afar off—solitude with the companionship of our tears and penitence, and—may we not venture to hope?—with the pardon and the protection of God.

But the morning breaks upon us with another feeling. “The bitterness of death is past.” Sadness, indeed, broods over the earth; but it is the sadness of the twilight dawn when the faint lines of glory are seen in the far east. We wait for the coming of that glory patiently; we scarcely wish it to draw near. There is a stillness so deep, so full, around us, that it seems profanation to disturb it. Who does not feel that the excitement of pleasure, as well as the

bewilderment of care, is unsuited to Easter Eve? It is a day of mystery and awe. It brings us close to the unseen world, and fills our homes with the shadows of those who have been summoned to it. And we have been learning to live with our Redeemer—to feel that our life is bound up in His Life—that “where He is, there must we be also;” and now we look for Him on Earth, and find only the still Form from which the Spirit has departed; we look for Him in Heaven, and—ever-present though He is in His Union with the Eternal Godhead,—it is not there that He yet vouchsafes His full Manifestation. When our thoughts search for Him through the Universe, they rest in the “Silent Land:” the Home of the Dead.

We may not follow Him thither in His Mission to the “Spirits in Prison.” The full meaning of those words is hidden from us. But we

may think, and with comfort unutterable, of the Blessedness which since that time has been granted to the world into which those that have fallen asleep in Christ have entered. He who opened the Gates of Paradise to the Penitent Thief, still vouchsafes His Presence there. They are with Him, and at rest.

The young, perhaps, can scarcely understand thoroughly what that thought is to those who are "weary and heavy-laden" with the cares and griefs of years. But God teaches us much by the incidents of common life. The fervent heat of a summer day passes, and the glory of sunset fills the sky: the breeze rustles amongst the foliage, and lightly ripples the wave which is flashing upon the beach. Exhausted by labor or by pleasure, we cast ourselves upon the turf, and look up into the sky, giving ourselves up to a feeling of

repose which has no wish for change—not even for a more vivid happiness: do we ever think that the bodily rest we so enjoy, is but the type of that pure, unspeakable rest which may be ours in Paradise? Or again—We linger by the side of a friend dearly loved, from whom we have been long parted. The first excitement of meeting is over; we do not speak, we have said all that it has first entered our minds to say; but we are not weary—we require nothing more—we wish only to sit silent, conscious of our happiness, assuring ourselves, by a glance from time to time, that it is real. The heart is at rest. But no, we deceive ourselves: change, and disappointment, and separation must come; there is no rest for the heart here. The happiness, full and deep though it may be, is but a type,—the reality is reserved for Paradise.

Many, many more such types there are given us day by day. Relief from pain, the cessation of a great anxiety, the calm which precedes sleep,—all tell the same tale, and all seem gathered into one in the spirit which pervades the blessed stillness of Easter Eve. And still, as the hours creep on, the light seems brightening in the horizon, and the foretaste of joy steals into our hearts; and if imagination revert to the sadness of the grave, and the grief of the mourning women keeping their Sabbath in preparation for the holy service they would fain render to the Body of their Lord, the consciousness seems to press upon us that we are in possession of a solemn but blessed secret—one which we can scarcely bear longer to hide in our own breasts, and earnestly we long to be permitted to whisper in their ears the tidings which another dawn

must bring—"He is not here; He is risen."

But those tidings are not yet theirs; neither must they be ours. God, in His Merciful Wisdom, prepares us gradually for great joy; and they who have had long experience of life would not wish it to be otherwise.

Strange it will seem to many, but a time may come when the thought of rest in Paradise may thrill us with a deeper present yearning than even the prospect of the glory which the heart of man cannot conceive.

Rest! It is the one dream of those who are bearing "the burden and heat of the day." The human mind, when worn and jaded by the conflict of the world, cannot pass with ease beyond it. When for years we have struggled with sin, and for years have been defeated, or gained but a doubtful victory,—when hope has brought

us disappointment, and exertion has been followed by failure,—when the fame, for which in youth we would have sacrificed Eternity, has poured down upon our heads with the dry, scorching heat of the meridian sun,—and the affection for which we have thirsted, as David thirsted for the waters of Bethlehem, has been tasted and found to be mingled with bitterness,—we lose in a measure the power of picturing to ourselves the glory and the beauty of the perfect Life that shall be hereafter. To think of infinite and increasing happiness is an effort too great for us. We feel as though we were not ready for it,—as if we would fain sleep awhile before we were called to enter upon it; and then it is that the weary spirit sinks down upon the green pastures, and rests beside the still waters of Paradise, that it may gather strength, not only for the enjoyment but even

for the perception, of the glories of Heaven.

If we cannot enter into that feeling now, yet let us be prepared for it. Should God spare our lives, and give us grace to endure unto the end, it will almost surely come. And it is a very blessed feeling. It is connected with all that is holy, chastened, and true. The prospect of such a rest admits of no self-delusion. If we are not ready for it, neither are we ready for the joy that shall follow it. There may possibly be seasons of unreal excitement, when we dwell in rapturous contemplation upon the glories of Heaven. We may read of the Golden City, its walls of jasper and its gates of pearl, and as we carry ourselves thither in imagination, and prostrate ourselves before the "Throne in sight like unto an emerald," to receive from the Hands of our Redeemer the Crown of life, our hearts

may glow within us, and we may pant for the hour of heavenly triumph, as for the grandeur of some earthly kingdom. But there is no triumph in the quiet Land of the Dead. The life that we shall there live will be the life of waiting and of rest. The body will be mouldering in the grave, and with it self-deception will moulder also; and when the veil of flesh is removed, and the spirit is awake before God, we shall see our true condition in His sight as we can never see it now. Oh! let us not store up for ourselves recollections of remorse and visions of dread, to disturb the stillness of that long day of preparation. We have spoken of it as rest—"the rest that remaineth for the people of God." There is another rest, which is no rest, but rather a fearful looking for of judgment. Let not this day pass over our heads before we have determined to which

we may venture to look forward. The "people of God" in the visible Church on earth are they who, by their Baptismal Covenant, are made the "Members of Christ, the Children of God, and the Inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven." The "people of God" in the invisible Church of the world that lieth beyond earth, are they who, justified by faith, and accepted for Christ's sake, have kept that Covenant, or have striven to keep it. Well will it be for us to inquire whether we may be numbered amongst them. No day can be more fit for such an examination. It is set apart for retirement and prayer—for thoughts of the world unseen, and those who have departed to it. If in that world there are now dwelling parents, brothers, friends, whom we yearn once more to meet,—if we know that they fought "the good fight" on earth, and believe

that God has taken them to rest,—on this day let us dwell with them once more vividly in imagination, as once we dwelt with them in presence. What we would not wish to remember in the presence of those purified Spirits, that must we shrink from now. The thoughts which would be unmeet for them are unmeet also for us; the hasty words which would break the stillness of that peaceful land, cannot be words for us; the actions which would be abhorrent to the Saints in rest are not, cannot be permitted to us who hope one day to rejoin them.

We speak of them as far off: they may be nearer to us than we know. God has cast a veil over their state, and we may not presumptuously attempt to penetrate it. But, at times, He seems to uplift it, and give us glimpses of a world hidden behind this outward world of sense, but in

which we are even now living and moving, and which is connected with us and acting upon us. Let us think of this as we may, there is one truth which must force itself upon us whenever we allow ourselves to face the facts of our present existence. The life which we now lead, and in which our hearts are so deeply interested, is a dream and a delusion, since it is passing away, moment by moment, more swiftly than thought can fly. The shadowy life in the world to which we are drawing near, and of which we speak as imaginary and unknown, is an abiding reality, since it will bring us but the change from rest to everlasting joy, or from sad and fearful expectation to the terrors of everlasting misery.

One moment, and we may be summoned to it! One Motion of the Almighty Will, and for us there shall be Time no longer! Does it terrify

us when, in the midst of a tempest at sea, we think that there is but a plank between us and death? Do we tremble when the lightning flashes across the sky, and we remember that in another second it may strike us to the ground? Do we marvel at the courage of the soldier who faces the shower of bullets, each one of which bears with it a message of destruction? Oh, weak and miserable in our blindness! We stand even now upon the plank,—the lightning is flaming in the sky, the bullets are whistling around our head. We are not, we can never be, without cause for alarm, except—yes, one way there is by which to calm ourselves. The unknown world, which we thus dread, let us dwell in it now by faith, and we shall cease to fear it. That which is our habitual resting-place becomes at length our home.

If we have never placed ourselves

in thought before in the peaceful world of Spirits, let us do so on this Easter Eve for the first time.

The Souls of the dead who have died in the Lord are awaiting us there ; the Angels who, as we believe, are watching over them, are ready to guard us ; the Saviour who died for us in agony upon the Cross, and will hereafter open to us the Gates of Glory, is prepared to welcome us !

Where our treasure is, there let our hearts be also. So shall the spell which, as by the magic of the enchanter's wand, has been cast over the world we see, be broken ; so shall our life on earth, be it long or short, as God may will, be but a quiet Easter Eve, in which care shall be hushed to sleep by faith, and sorrow by resignation, and even the conflict with sin shall be borne without a murmur, in the consciousness of His aid who has triumphed over it.

God grant that it may be so! God grant that when the last change shall come, we may fall asleep in Christ!

Hallowed, indeed, and sweet shall that rest be. Gently shall the hours, unmarked by time, float onwards into the Ocean of Eternity, whilst leaning on the Saviour's Breast, we wait for the accomplishment of the number of the Elect, who, "through the grave and gate of death, shall pass to their joyful Resurrection, for His merits who died, and was buried, and rose again for us—JESUS CHRIST, our Lord."

Easter Day.

COLOSSIANS, Chap. iii. 1.—“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above.”

CHRIST is risen! Those are the words with which, in a distant country, men are accustomed to greet each other on the morning of Easter Day. “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” And what event in the world’s history, may we not almost venture to say in the history of the Universe, is so worthy to be treasured in all our hearts as that which this day commemorates? Yesterday—if yesterday had been all—the dead would have

perished, faith would have been vain, we should have been yet in our sins. "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the Resurrection of the dead."

Yet when we thus speak, we are not looking at the fact of the Resurrection as it appeared to the women who first visited the Sepulchre, or the Disciples who received their testimony that the Body of their Lord had been taken away, but rather viewing it through the long vista of ages, and by the light which Scripture has since cast upon it. The future mingles with the past, and the glorious triumph of the last Great Day with the silent uprising witnessed by angels, and not by men. If we would sympathize with those who were the heralds of the Resurrection to all succeeding generations, we

must be content for a while to forget the hope this day revealed, and place ourselves once more in the gloom and despondency which followed the Burial of our Lord.

Easter Morning to us speaks only of light and joy. To Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, it must have told only of sorrow and mourning. The sleep of their Easter Eve was unlike ours. They had no dreams of the Resurrection to soothe it. Troubled it may have been—short, we have reason to believe it was—for “very early in the morning, while it was yet dark,” they went forth to see the Sepulchre, carrying with them the spices which on the preceding evening they had prepared, to anoint the Sacred Body of their Master. If we have ever been stunned by a great grief, and then compelled to rouse ourselves from it and return to the duties of ordinary life, we can picture

to our fancy, in some faint measure, how dreary and sad that walk must have been in the cold, uncertain light of the glimmering dawn—how hopeless the necessary business of the coming day must have appeared—how they must have shrunk from the thought of any employment, but that hallowed one upon which they were about to enter. And fear might probably have mingled with their sorrow. The Great Earthquake which accompanied the descent of the Angel of the Lord, who “came and rolled back the stone from the door of the Sepulchre,” must have been perceived by them, though they could little understand its cause. And if the “bodies of the Saints which slept” were then released like their Redeemer from the grave, the horror of supernatural dread may have blended with their terror, and perhaps connected itself with the remembrance of the

darkness which shrouded the last moments of the Saviour's life, and the rending asunder of the Temple Veil, which had seemed to prophesy the destruction of all they had hitherto deemed most holy.

"They went towards the Sepulchre," accompanied by Salome, the mother of St. John. Most probably she was resident with him, and his house, it is supposed, was near the spot. The sun had not yet risen, and as they proceeded onwards, they said among themselves, "Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?" They were not, it seems, aware that a guard had been placed there; the natural impediment was the only one which presented itself to their minds; and as "they lifted up their eyes,"—that is, as they had now ascended the rising ground, and came in sight of the sepulchre, which at once stood

before them, facing the East, and the rising dawn,—“they saw that the Stone was rolled away, for it was very great.” It was still dark, but in the twilight the vast aperture was distinctly seen. That fact is a confirmation of the Resurrection to us—but it was none to them. Either friends or enemies might have been interested in concealing the Saviour’s Body; and this appears to have been the first thought which suggested itself to the mind of Mary Magdalene. Ardent and impassioned—for such her natural disposition must have been—she did not stop to inquire further, but, leaving her companions, she hastened, as it would naturally appear, to the house of St. John, where she was certain of finding those who would be most deeply interested in her tale, and from whom, with a woman’s sense of weakness, she probably desired to seek aid.

"She runneth and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved."

St. Peter and St. John were then together. There is something comforting in that assurance. The blank in St. Peter's history, after his three-fold denial, is very mournful. We know not whether he ventured to follow his Lord to the scene of His suffering, or whether he retired to weep for Him afar off. At the Crucifixion, we hear only of those who were faithful. The timid and cowardly might, we should think, well pass from sight, and be forgotten. But St. John, in his tender sympathy, could, doubtless, remember the fellow-disciple who had sinned, even whilst he wept for His Lord's Anguish, and soothed the sorrow of His Blessed Mother. He alone had been a witness of St. Peter's transgression, and he alone is mentioned as still clinging to him.

“They ran,” we are told, “both together.” St. John was the first to reach the Tomb ; but he did not enter. He saw the linen clothes, in which Joseph of Arimathea had so reverently enwrapped His Lord’s Body, lying there ; and the circumstance must have struck him as remarkable,—for who would have borne away the Body in such a manner?—but he did not search further. St. Peter, more eager, advanced beyond,—probably into the interior of the outer sepulchre—from whence he could look into the inner recess, in which His Lord had been laid. The napkin which had covered the Saviour’s Head was wrapped together in a place by itself, indicating that no rude treatment or hasty violence had been used ;—the tomb was empty.

The full truth does not even then appear to have forced itself upon them. St. John, indeed, says of

himself, that he went in also to the sepulchre, and saw and believed ;— but it could scarcely have been the full belief that, by His own Power, the Lord had broken the bonds of Death ; for he adds, immediately afterwards, “As yet they knew not the Scripture that He must rise again from the dead.

“Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.”

So slowly did the fact upon which every Christian now builds his dearest hopes bring conviction to the minds of the Apostles. So little can we compare the certainty of expectation with which we are accustomed to greet the morning of Easter Day, with the faint, dim, yet deepening happiness which stole into the hearts of the disciples, as every fresh circumstance confirmed the truth of the Angel's announcement,—“He is not here ; He is risen.”

Not till Mary Magdalene, standing, weeping at the sepulchre, is addressed by the Lord Himself, does it seem that it could be given to any one fully to understand the Blessedness of that Day. And even then, how calm, how reverent and subdued does the joy appear! "Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto Him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master."

Is it not a miracle, a marvel beyond human comprehension, that an event so overpowering in its nature, and so infinite in its consequences, should have been thus received?

But so it is: God's ways are unlike our ways. He speaks not in the earthquake and the whirlwind, but in the still, small voice. And the earthquake and the whirlwind pass by, but the voice remains to echo in our hearts for ever. If we would

know the real effect of that act of Almighty Power upon the hearts of the Apostles of Christ, we must search for it in their lives. The event ever present to them, the truth which they proclaimed to Jew and Gentile, and for which they were willing to face death in all its terrors, was the Resurrection of Christ from the dead. It was that which, through the power of the Holy Ghost, converted them from timid, anxious disciples, with narrow views and worldly hopes, into bold, uncompromising preachers of their Lord's Gospel, counting all things but loss, so that they might win Christ.

They received the truth calmly, but they died for it.

That may seem strange to us. Looking onward from the spring-time of life, while hope is fresh and joy has never withered, the imagination casts itself forward beyond the

fact of the Resurrection from the dead, and plunges into the Ocean of untold, unfathomable happiness which we believe shall follow it, with a feeling of hope, breathless and overwhelming. We read of the Land in which "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying;" of the Tabernacle of God, which shall be with men, when the first heaven and the first earth shall have passed away; of the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, which shall descend out of Heaven from God, having the Glory of God, whose light shall be "like unto a stone most precious, even as a Jasper stone, clear as crystal;"—and in one moment, life, and death, and the world of spirits, and the Great White Throne before which all shall appear in judgment, vanish from before us, and the pulse throbs quickly, and the glow of excitement kindles in our veins, whilst we pass at once

from time and its probation, to Eternity and its reward.

It is not wrong,—it is but the result of a great truth underlying all other truth,—but which, amidst our earthly trials, it is very difficult to realize. We call life sad,—we talk of this weary world—of the burden of existence—of the dreariness of our journey, and the fears and disappointment which attend it. It is all true,—more true than the young can yet imagine; but there is something truer still, which they know better than the old. It is, that we were created for joy; that we were made in the image of God,—God, All Holy, All Perfect, and All Blest,—and that amidst the wreck of sin, and the ruin of earth, this one principle of our Being still exists.

The inextinguishable craving of our hearts finds its rest only in the Eternity and Infinity of the Blessedness of Heaven.

We may trace this fact clearly. The accents of sorrow fall, indeed, more readily from our lips than those of joy; yet pain and grief are the accidents of existence, and gladness and enjoyment are parts of its essential nature. There is something in the fulness of childhood's glee, and the more chastened but equally vivid enjoyment of early youth, which we feel cannot belong to earth. A child turns to happiness as the flower turns to the light,—it is the element in which it lives; and this happiness may be crushed by care; it may be buried—perhaps never to rise again—by sin; but its spring can never in this life be quenched. We think that we leave it behind us as we journey onwards; but it is not so. We are carrying it with us,—if, through God's unspeakable mercy, we shall be amongst the number of the saved,—to be with us in the rest of Paradise,

and spring forth into life indestructible on the glorious Morning of the Resurrection. And there are moments when, amidst all the sorrows which now darken our path, we are permitted again to perceive it. Some unlooked-for association of ideas brings back to us the glow of our early joy. We say it is memory; but it is not memory, it is reality. Memory is but a dream of that which has no present existence to us. This is a feeling of which we are actually conscious; it is happiness,—real, living, glowing,—only experienced for a moment and then gone; as in our mournful blindness we think, never to return. We look back from the mountain of life's care, and see the sparkling stream flowing through the plains,—we do not know that it is still making its way through the dark caves beneath our feet, and hastening to blend its waters with the River of eternal gladness.

These thoughts may seem rather to belong to the old than to the young. We may imagine that there is no need to speak to them of the joy which they now experience to be a reality. But it is for that very reason they are reminded of it. The treasure is theirs, and they need to be taught to prize it.

For Happiness is sacred—more sacred than the anguish of Grief, or the tears of Repentance. It belongs to the very Being of God. Our Redeemer took upon Himself sorrow, but in His Nature He was blest; and each thrill of delight, or glow of enjoyment, which is vouchsafed to us, is the remnant of the bliss lost for us by the first Adam in Paradise, and the foretaste of the eternal joy prepared for us by the second Adam in Heaven.

The fulness, then, of our youthful delight, is a treasure for which we

are unquestionably accountable. Happiness, so far as God has been pleased to place it within our reach, is a duty, since by it we learn to look forward to Heaven; and every cloud of discontent, or thought of moody repining, or passing word of uncalled-for annoyance, sullies the brightness of that store of glad recollections which we are bidden to carry with us on our journey through life, as the earnest of the blessedness that shall be hereafter.

And it may be wise to ponder upon this truth for another reason. If we could lay it to heart, it would hallow and purify our enjoyments. Into Heaven "nothing that defileth" can enter. The pleasure, therefore, that is mingled with sin, is no pleasure—it is but a phantom. It will not be borne with us now in peaceful memory; it will not wake with us hereafter in glorious reality.

But there are joys—transient it may be, but vivid—which it is not only our wisdom, but our duty, fully to realize to ourselves whilst present, and carefully to enshrine in our remembrance when past. Let us recall the feelings with which on a summer morning we have gazed upon some scene of beauty—the thrill of delight which the songs of the birds, the freshness of the green earth, and the glory of the cloudless sky, have brought to our hearts. Let us remember the rapturous excitement with which we have listened to some voice of melody; the calmer, but deeper enjoyment, of some successful research into the secrets of science or learning; or—better, dearer, more precious than aught on earth beside—the intense unalloying happiness of the affections which God has vouchsafed to bless—the knowledge that we love and are beloved.

Past are those joys, but not dead; they are awaiting us at the Gates of Heaven. There, where the pure River of the Water of Life wells forth eternally from the Throne of God;—there, where the tree which is for “the healing of the nations” brings forth its unfading fruits;—in the Land which “the Glory of God” doth lighten, and where, in the immediate Presence of our Redeemer, we shall repose in the bliss of the love which knows no change save that of increase;—the happiness of our childhood multiplied into infinity shall be ours for ever.

Only let us not now be dazzled with the anticipation. The Apostles saw, talked with, lived, in the Presence of their Risen Lord. They followed Him to the mountain of Galilee, and watched as “He was parted from them, and a cloud received Him out of their sight;” and for a while “they

looked steadfastly toward Heaven," following Him in His glorious ascent, and resting with Him in spirit before the Throne of God. And then they returned to Jerusalem, to suffer and to die for Him.

So let it be with us.—To-day we are admitted into Heaven; To-morrow—

There are a few words spoken by St. Paul to his Philippian Converts, which we may safely carry with us from the joy of Easter, to be our warning and our blessing, not only for to-morrow, but for the weeks, months, years, that may follow it.

"Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.

“And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds, through Christ Jesus.”

THE END.

JUN 29



